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ARTHUR'S SEAT;
OR,
THE CHURCH OF THE BANNED.



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OR,
THE CHURCH OF THE BANNED.



BY
JOHN HAMILTON,
OF ST. ERNAN'S, M.A. OF ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

	PAGE
INTRODUCTORY.—THE PROFESSOR	1

CHAPTER II.

ARTHUR'S SEAT	10
-------------------------	----

CHAPTER III.

"PROVE ALL THINGS"	22
------------------------------	----

CHAPTER IV.

"NOT THAT WE HAVE DOMINION OVER YOUR FAITH, BUT ARE HELPER'S OF YOUR JOY".	59
---	----

CHAPTER V.

"HEAVEN IS MY THRONE, AND EARTH IS MY FOOTSTOOL" . .	102
--	-----

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER VI.

	PAGE
ANTIPODES	133

CHAPTER VII.

“HIM THAT IS WEAK IN THE FAITH RECEIVE YE ; BUT NOT TO DOUBTFUL DISPUTATIONS”	155
--	-----

CHAPTER VIII.

GRAHAM'S SERMON	166
---------------------------	-----

CHAPTER IX.

WHAT PASSED BETWEEN MR. THOMPSON AND MR. CLOSE . . .	182
--	-----

ARTHUR'S SEAT;

OR,

THE CHURCH OF THE BANNED.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.—THE PROFESSOR.

THIRTY years ago, or thereabouts, as I was travelling in France, I heard of a remarkably excellent priest of a parish in the district in which I was making some stay.

I wished to see what line of teaching and preaching, and of moral and social rule, was pursued by such a man.

Learning his name, I asked if he was any relation to Mr. N——, whom I had known as a professor of languages several years before.

17

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"He is the Professor's youngest brother," was the reply.

The next day I visited the Professor, and asked him to make me acquainted with his brother, the parish-priest, and explained the purpose of my request.

He replied that he was doubly sorry not to be able to comply. First, because he would much wish to further my purpose; and secondly, because it was the very bad health of his brother which was the absolutely imperative cause of his refusal to introduce me.

"My brother," said he, "is dying. A constitution, naturally delicate, has given way under the work of an extensive country parish. He has worked for some years knowing that he must soon sink; but he had devoted himself, in love, to his Saviour and his flock, and dies like a faithful soldier, on the field of battle. I cannot," added he, "regret it." And he spoke truly, though he wept as he spoke.

We had then some conversation upon the subjects about which I had wished to speak with his brother. He was as much interested as I was, and told me he had educated his brother, who was above twenty years his junior; that they were to an extraordinary degree

of one heart and one mind. "If there is a difference, it is in the unbounded love which my brother bears to all men, unbroken by varieties of opinion, even where the opinion concerns no light matter. Now, sir, if you will make use of me as you wished to do of him, I am at your service, and I may add with confidence that my brother will rejoice that I am to be his representative in such brotherly discussion as I anticipate."

It was a fortified town in which Professor N—— lived, and at an hour arranged to suit his avocations we met daily for an hour's walk on the ramparts, which indeed often unconsciously grew into two or even three hours.

We discussed many points in which we thoroughly agreed; some in which our agreement was imperfect; and almost, if not altogether, all those upon which we disagreed.

Those on which we thoroughly agreed bound us together with a bond which no disagreement upon other matters, however important, could sever or even weaken. It was not a question whether we *should* be so united—we *were*. We found we were so; and that, in the

very nature of the union, it could not be broken. Though differences might give rude shocks—painful shakes—severe trials—that bond could not break.

We both felt this.

In one of our last discussions I said to him, "Are we not of one *Church*, notwithstanding our very great differences upon certain important points?"

He replied that he had had the same question in various half-formed shapes frequently upon his tongue.

"Yet," said he, "you belong to a Protestant Church—I to the Roman Catholic."

"What makes the difference?"

"The different tenets which we hold in disagreement from each other."

"Yes," I replied; "and does that make one or other of us not of the Church of Christ?"

He replied, "It does not; but I confess it perplexes me. We are, and we are not, of one Church. But see!" cried he, "is there not much in a name? Does a *system of doctrines* make '*a Church*' in any sense in which the Bible uses the word? It seems to me as if all who love Jesus, and by Him are led to love God and men, are *the Church*; and that all the

subdivisions are *something else*. What shall I call them?"

I said, "They seem to me, as you speak, to take the position of *societies* or *associations* within the Church. As among all the farmers of Europe, there are various agricultural societies and clubs. Every one who farms is a farmer; but he is not necessarily a member of the farming society to which I belong; nor can he *unless he assents to the peculiar rules of that society*, and adopts them for himself; but though you and I are members of different farming societies, we are brother farmers, are we not?"

"That is it," cried he: "the name of '*a Church*' is nothing; it is the fact which signifies."

"Yes, the fact is the great thing; but is it not of great importance that the fact should be called *by the right name*? Does not the wrong application of the name often prevent the perception and the appreciation of the fact?"

"But no society," said he, "which has adopted the name of '*Church*,' will give it up."

"Yet *Truth is great, and will prevail*, though we may have to wait for the final victory; and the use

of a false name is a falsehood—especially of a name which conveys so deluding an idea as that of ‘*Church*’ as we misuse it.”

“Well,” said he, as we parted—not to meet again on earth, “you are sanguine. I fear the word ‘*Church*’ will perpetuate divisions by giving a nominal essential importance to the rules and rites of each association, and by giving men a standing point from which to pronounce causes against each other. But, my friend, let us remember we are farmers, though of different notions in agriculture. We are of one body, though of different notions connected with that body.”

Since that time I have met other men like-minded; though none who would so speak out their mind—men who called themselves of different churches, according to the system and scheme of religion which they adopted, but who readily and gladly acknowledged the brotherhood of all who fear God and work righteousness—loving the Lord Jesus; men who look for occasions of giving the right hand of fellowship, and do not look for, nor willingly notice, occasions for refusing it.

Such may be called Latitudinarians—implying that

they do not care much what a man is in his faith or religious profession. Nothing can be less according to truth. He who so prizes those two simple tests (working righteousness in the fear of God, and loving Jesús) as to find them links of iron binding him to his God and to his brother man, will assuredly value very highly everything that tends, in his estimation, to further the fear of God, the works of righteousness, and the love of Jesus. *Only he will not show his sense of their value by using them as wedges to rift and split the Church into antagonistic societies, mutually anathematizing*, but will desire, by every means, to lead the members of all societies which are in the Church to endeavour to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

Since my conversations on the ramparts with the Professor, I have known and familiarly conversed on these topics with many laymen and clergymen in France, Germany, Switzerland, England, Scotland, and Ireland.

The general tone of those who have, in a kindly spirit, discussed these matters has been that of an endeavour to evade a distinct answer, or rather, I

should say, to avoid coming to so distinct an understanding with themselves as would oblige them to draw a conclusion, and, in consistency, to act up to it.

Many, however, admit that the union of the churches is a thing most earnestly to be desired, and this desire has uttered itself, of late, frequently.

This little book is written for the express purpose of drawing attention to the fact that the hindrance which will hinder till it be taken out of the way is, THE REQUIRING ASSENT TO TOO MANY THINGS, AND REQUIRING AGREEMENT TOO ABSOLUTELY IN EXPRESSION.

One, or at most two things are enough for our GOD to accept us upon. True, they are but foundations, upon which superstructure is to be raised, and the material and architecture of that superstructure are matters of importance. Surely the way to show our sense of the importance of details is not by making them implements of contention and mutual anathematizing, cutting each other off (as far as lies in us) from the body; but rather, when we can get at one point of religious union, "speaking the truth *in love*, let us grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly

joined together and compacted by that which every joint (or junction) supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.”

It will be something, and will lead to more, if some who accept the suggestions given here will acknowledge and grasp as brother Christians those who, however they may differ, love Jesus, fear God, and work righteousness, taking care always that, claiming this freedom and professing this liberty, they do not anathematize those who cannot agree with them in this also, but who still hold to their too common bigotry and exclusiveness.

He is no truly free man who cannot endure a bigot; but the way to vanquish bigotry is by liberal, discriminating love, acknowledging every good thing that may be in the bigot, and gently handling every unsound spot which is obvious, plainly showing desire to *heal* not to *expose* the sore.

I dedicate the following story, which is *truth in fiction*, to the memory of him whose conversation gave me so happy an impulse forward in the road on which I desire to go—my friend Professor N——.

CHAPTER II.

ARTHUR'S SEAT.

ON the romantic rock close to Edinburgh one fine Sunday might be seen a middle-aged gentleman of intelligent countenance, whose elastic step and upright carriage bespoke a vigorous and healthy body and mind.

It might not be without interest to guess at his thoughts. No one could observe him for a few minutes without being certain that he was no mere stroller idling away a vacant hour.

Sometimes he seemed absorbed in meditation; at another moment it appeared as if his whole mind was occupied with admiration of the scene before his eyes — so lovely and so grand. And again as groups or solitary walkers passed by, he evidently regarded them with peculiar attention and interest. He seemed as if in his inmost being he was holding a kind of

communication with all he saw, with all above and around him.

At this hour (about mid-day) there were not many people there; but among the few were two men walking together, one older than our first acquaintance, whose name was Graham, the other a good deal younger. As they passed him, and he bestowed on them that attentive look with which he met each who approached, he heard the elder say to the younger in a bantering tone, "Tell me, Brown, how is it that you who, when we met a few years ago, were always poking religion upon me, are now strolling at church-time, of a Sunday, like a godless unbeliever such as I am?"

Graham had seated himself on one of the rocks beside the path, and Brown and his companion stopped close to him, evidently regardless of being overheard.

"Ah, my dear Smith," replied Brown, "it is not willingly that I am wandering here alone, as you found me; but I can't *go to church*, as it is called, as I used to do."

"I always said, you remember, that you would cut

that connexion. I knew you were quite too high an intellect, too free a spirit, too noble a heart to be long enslaved by religion, with all its Bible-reading, its sermon-hearing, its tight rules and close regulations. I congratulate you upon your deliverance, and the freedom which your church-time walk on this glorious hill proclaims."

"Never did you make a greater mistake," said Brown. "When we met last, I had not long considered the importance of religion. If I had been brought up a Church-of-England man, and had been a tolerably steady professor of those tenets, I must confess no faith had got such a hold of me as to make me half as good a moral man as I know you to be. However, I did turn over a new leaf, and have been able to keep tolerably well to my resolutions. You had, inadvertently, no small share in the great change that passed over me."

"I! how could that be? It was you who were always for converting the poor unbeliever, Bob Smith, old sinner as he was."

"Yes, you. I had often heard you speak so decidedly against religion and religious people, that I

trembled for you ; and though so much younger, I could not help admonishing and urging you. I admired the temper with which you took it all, while I lamented what seemed, and still seems to me, the obstinate blindness which will not see the excellency and beauty of the Christian religion. But when I had so spoken to you of your faith, and urged the truths of revelation upon your acceptance, and then, alone, in sober coolness, thought of your self-control, self-denial, kindness to your equals, beneficence to your poorer neighbours, courtesy towards all, I was rebuked, ashamed, and sent to seek to be better, before I dared to blame or to instruct others. Hitherto I have never been able to think what can stir up an unbeliever like you to such goodness. Nay, don't contradict me, I am no flatterer."

" My dear fellow, I am not going to contradict you, but to give you a bit of information in reply to your sort of question. If I am benevolent in some degree ; if I try to command myself, and to keep my passions, impulses, and wishes, under restraint, it is just because I see those who don't are mere self-tormentors. My torment is that I see, in imagination, so much greater

virtue than I can ever hope to attain to, and therefore have a distant view of happiness which I can never hope to enjoy. This torments me, and makes me feel all I have, all I am, is of no value. What can we have our existence for if it is not to enjoy it?"

"How different," said Brown, "your idea of enjoyment of life is from that of many."

"Yes, poor fools; yet *their* folly spoils *my* life too. That is one of the riddles of life to me. It is just as if we all constituted *one* being, and that till the *whole* is sound no *part* is quite well. But you are shirking my question. How is it that I catch a religious man like you sauntering about at church-time? And in Edinburgh, too!"

"Well, see now, I think it is because no Church will have me."

"Won't have you! What do you mean?"

"I mean that none of them will admit me as one of them, or at least would do so if they knew either that I do not agree in all they hold, or that I hold what they repudiate."

"And have any of them turned you out? Excommunicated you, eh?"

"No, not actually. Yet if I were to declare what I believe, and they do not; or what I do not believe that they do (that is, what their books of authority declare is to be repudiated or accepted), I could not expect them to hold me as one with whom Christian brotherly communion ought to be held."

"Do they require you to agree specially with all their acceptings and repudiatings?"

"No, not quite; but, in conscience, they take, or ought to take, my outward acquiescence by joining in their forms, as a profession that I agree with their tenets. Besides, they have what they call an *ipso facto* excommunication, which, if not possible to be legally enforced, yet remains unrepealed in the laws of the Established Church of England, and is laid before the congregation in the Prayer-books in all cathedral, collegiate, and other such churches. By this any one who says that anything in the Book of Common Prayer is not according to Scripture *is excommunicate*, not liable to be, but *is*. So that when I have joined with congregations and communicants I could not but fee myself an interloper, not only *not a bidden*, but a *forbidden* guest, though neither clergy nor laity might

be aware of it; and that feeling drove me out of church and brought me here."

"OUT OF CHURCH! HERE!"

These words involuntarily burst from Graham's lips, and made both Smith and Brown start.

Their movement and looks made Graham aware that he had spoken audibly what had risen in his heart and mind.

Getting up and stepping towards them, he said:

"Gentlemen, I have overheard, though I did not listen. It was plain you were not talking secrets, or I should have taken care not to hear. I beg pardon if I interrupted your conversation."

"Oh, not at all," cried both at once. "But," added Smith, "what was the meaning of your utterance? which we also overheard, though not listening."

"I meant," said Graham, with a very peculiar tone and mien, "that I came *here* to *Church*, while this gentleman says he was driven out of church hither."

"I fear I don't quite catch your meaning," replied Smith.

"Sirs, there is sufficient brotherhood between us,

enhanced by the similarity of condition, and the adventure of our thus meeting, to justify me in joining myself, or asking permission to do so, to your company. May I say what occurs to me now?"

"Pray do."

"Well, then, hear me. I was a minister of the Church of Scotland (so called). I thought it was not only a Church, but *the* Church; and at first I was brought, every thought, into obedience to the Church as set before me in the symbolical books. After a time I began to question some of the things I was bound to teach, and as a Protestant my appeal was to the Scriptures, which seemed to me to confirm my doubts. I mentioned my doubts and scruples; I mentioned some things which appeared to me to be certainly true in Scripture, and according to the principles of good and character of God. They were important matters, and my dissent from what was plainly the teaching of the Scottish Church caused me intense anxiety and grief. I consulted brother-ministers, but found little help. They all insisted I must be wrong. I appealed to Bible and reason, they to symbolical books and authority; and, when I could not agree to

do so too, their conscience obliged them (and they acted conscientiously) to denounce me. Had they not, I should soon have denounced myself. I was placed upon my trial; I appealed to the Scriptures, but I was told that the accusation was not that I denied what was *there*, but that I impugned the doctrines of their symbolical writings, and on this accusation I was found guilty. They turned me *out of their Church*. I found myself IN THE CHURCH. Though those men pronounced me separated from them, I found myself joined to them as I had never before pictured a union with my fellow-men. Their saying I was separated could not separate me. From their peculiar association, bound by their peculiar rules, I was separated, and rightly so; but are hands which wear different coloured gloves therefore separated from the body or from each other, even if they are said to be so. They will not let me worship our Father in heaven in their house, nor permit me to invoke our Saviour's name in their meeting, so I come *HERE*; and in this great and glorious temple, which, bounded by immensity, and vaulted by the bright heavens, contains all the temples made with hands, I worship with all who

worship the Almighty Father of all, I invoke the name of Jesus with all who in every place appeal to that Lord both theirs and ours. Have I made myself understood?"

"Most perfectly," replied Brown. "As the greater contains the less, so does such a temple and such a worship contain all lesser. Yes; I hope, I believe, that, stimulated and taught by what you have said, I also *here* come to *Church*, though I came not with that intent. Shall we not, do we not, worship together here?"

Smith looked puzzled. "I should try to say I am not able to understand two old hands at religious talk; but I am really puzzled to find myself caught fairly understanding a conversation altogether and pre-eminently religious, and not only so, but entrapped so as to be involuntarily yet actually a worshipper here too. I came here to escape Church, and see! I find myself in such a one as I never dreamed of. Well, if I do worship, it is in such company as Bob Smith might begin religious life with, for am I not associated with two men UNDER THE BAN? Curious missionaries to convert a seasoned infidel, eh?"

Graham took out his pocket Bible. He read the nineteenth Psalm and the twelfth chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Romans.

When he had closed the book he looked up and said, 'There is neither speech nor language where their voice is not heard.'

Smith astonished them by exclaiming, "'Be not overcome! but overcome evil with good!' That is a word to stir a man up."

After some minutes' silence they rose up together, linked arms, and walked along the broad gravel-walk.

Smith broke the silence, saying, "Well, I imagined that I should feel horrid sheepish whenever I might be caught by religious folk and over-persuaded to join them. But I feel—what? Shall I say 'ashamed'? Yes, I am ashamed—very; but that's not the uppermost feeling. I feel a better man than I was; I feel—shall I say *proud*?—of being cared for by a mighty God; of being the offspring of the Maker of this glorious temple; of having worshipped Him in His temple with you, my two friends, let me say so—my two friends *under the Ban*!"

They had more conversation till the striking clocks below them gave notice that it was time for each to return home. Their avocations required their attention during the week ; but they *trysted* (in the idiom of the country) to meet at noon in the same place next Sunday.

CHAPTER III.

“PROVE ALL THINGS.”

DURING the week Brown was much cast down. He was a sincere man, and attached to the forms in which he had been brought up. He married young, and being of a domestic temperament he delighted in his wife, his little children, and his home—a pretty residence upon a moderate estate in Derbyshire. This drew him away from the dissipations of the gay world, and he fancied himself very good on that account—not perceiving, first, that it was self-indulgence, not self-denial, which influenced him; and secondly, that he withdrew as much from the duties as from the dissipations which occupied the time of most men of his position.

However, he was sincere; and (as most men are who sincerely follow what they are brought up to, without much inquiry or investigation) he was as

sincere a bigot as Saul of Tarsus had been in the like situation. His wife was a woman of singular firmness of character, conscientious to the extreme, totally without imagination, but full of good sound sense, and withal cheerful and well-informed. In religion, husband and wife stood on the same ground, she being, of the two, rather the least bigoted.

After he had taken his quiet domestic line, and, if not *cut*, yet withdrawn very much from his former associates, even from most of his relatives, he began to think he was not as useful as he might be. A conversation with a religious friend who admired and rather flattered his unworldly way of life, stirred him up to try to bring others to as practical an application of religion to every-day life as he himself practised.

The result was, Brown at twenty-eight years of age put himself in communication with the Rector of his parish, and by his advice took a class of half-grown-up lads in the Sunday-school, and joined a Sunday-school Union, the members of which met once a month at the Rectory.

Sincere and conscientious, he found himself a teacher.

At length the question forced itself upon him, "Do I *know* the things I *teach*?"

The first effect of this question, and its unsatisfactory answer in his own heart, was that he went to the Rector and told him he must, at least for a time, give up his class.

The clergyman argued the matter with him, and urged his continuance in the work he had begun, insisting that if he kept closely to the teaching of the Church he need not fear going astray.

The conference with the Rector was on the morning of the day upon which the members of the Sunday-school Union assembled, and Brown joined them in a state of mind by no means satisfactory to himself. He could not answer the Rector, nor offer any argument against his reasoning, yet he was far from convinced that he was right in teaching for truth what *other people*, however good and wise, believed and maintained. "If they know it, that does not make me know it," thought he to himself.

The members of the Society read together in the Scriptures, and afterwards conversed freely on topics connected with their Sunday-schools. Brown took

occasion to introduce the subject which weighed upon his mind. He found that the general feeling was, that the teachers, both male and female, considered themselves as under the clergyman, to teach what he approved; he, and not they, being responsible for its orthodoxy. Brown demurred a little at this evasion of responsibility, and at last he said, "You cannot evade the responsibility, though you may evade the *feeling* of it."

However, neither he nor the others succeeded in convincing each other.

On Sunday he was in his place. His class were, some of them, acute-minded lads, and almost all were well read in Scripture, and trained in the lower classes of the school to answer as it was expected they should do. But Brown's own fermenting mind led him to take an unusual method with his class now.

Having read a paragraph with his boys, he said, "Now let us see what this teaches us; what these words, in fact, tell us."

Accordingly he asked a question, which was at once answered by the boy he addressed, who gave a meaning to the passage read, which obviously was not *in* it. Nevertheless the idea conveyed in the answer was

one which *other* places in Scripture supported. Brown replied, "But what does the passage we have just read tell us? You see it does not say what you have answered, but something else, and we want to come at *what this passage tells us.*"

The boys comprehended his purpose, and entered with spirit into this method, which came to them with a power very different from the way they had answered, in cut-and-dry form, before. They questioned the passages as they read them, and took the answers they *found in* them, instead of *putting in* answers which, whether right or wrong, were not given *by* the words they questioned.

In the course of their reading and searching, a question was asked, and a generally supposed orthodox answer was given. But one of the lads at once objected to it as not being *the* answer given in the passage under examination.

The class, including the answerer, assented to this fact. "But," said he who had answered, "it is a truth nevertheless, and is asserted in other places in Scripture."

"Of course it is," said Brown, quoting a passage;

but immediately one of the lads said, "Is it *in* that either?"

It was not, though something about the matter was.

Another place was appealed to, but with like result.

The answer which had been given was, however, one the truth of which neither Brown nor any of the class doubted for a moment.

Several more attempts were as great failures. Brown was annoyed.

"Surely," said he, "some of you can find a passage which proves this to be according to Scripture."

The boys turned over their Bible pages diligently, as if sure of finding what they sought; but an astonished look and a murmured "No," was all that could be seen or heard from the best of them.

The Rector coming to that part of the school just then, Brown appealed to him.

"Oh yes, certainly," quoting the very passage Brown had first referred to.

"Nay, that does not say it," said Brown.

"But stay, this is it," quoting another which the lads had already brought forward.

"Neither does that say it."

"But they both *mean* it," said the Rector, a little vexed.

"So I should have thought; but—but I should like to see a passage in Scripture that *says* it, that would be satisfactory."

"It could not be more satisfactory than to know this must be the sense. What else can?" replied the Rector.

"Why, the more natural sense of the words," said Brown, "would be——"

"Ah! I see," cried the Rector, interrupting him, "you are splitting hairs—teaching these youngsters to be rationalists, to trust their own clever heads and not——"

"Not what?" rejoined Brown.

"Not the *Church*," angrily said the Rector.

"I thought our appeal was to the *Bible*," said Brown.

"Well!"

"Well, I appeal to the Bible for an answer to the present question. If the Bible does not give you an answer that agrees with your views, are you to supply one in accordance with your notion of orthodoxy?"

"Upon my word, sir, you are getting upon dangerous ground."

"Dangerous to whom?"

"To all who tread upon it, sir."

"Dangerous rather, I should say," said Brown, "to all who set up man's opinion instead of Scripture declaration."

"And do you, sir, pretend to know and to judge all that is in the Bible?"

"By no means; but it is something very different to search, and see what the Bible says."

"And do you think you can always understand what the Bible says?"

"Far—very far from it; but some of what is said there I can understand; and if there is some, and much which I cannot as yet, such portions say nothing as yet to my understanding: I must wait and study, hoping to see more light."

"Then you admit that what I say is the right answer. Is it so?"

"My dear sir, the question was not as to the rightness or wrongness of the doctrine, but as to its being taught by the words of the Bible. Certainly it is not

found in any of the passages that have been hitherto suggested."

"Whether or not, it is true, and the only true view of the matter." Saying this loudly, and with an authoritative voice and mien, the Rector withdrew.

The school was soon closed.

Brown had been certain in his mind that the position held by the Rector was the truth; he had always heard it so pronounced, and had never doubted it; but the dogmatical way in which it had been attempted to force it down his throat disgusted him, and he went home full of unpleasant doubts.

"If *this* be not true, what becomes of Christianity?" said he to his wife, when he had told her the whole story.

"If it be not," replied she; "*If!* indeed. Does not everybody know that it is true? But if it were not, then Christianity would just be by so much different from what you and I fancied it, and I daresay we should as easily accommodate ourselves to it that way as this way."

"But it would change the very source and current of our religion."

"Ay, *if* it were not true. If that doctrine about which the question rose is really not in the Bible; but we know it is in it, and if not, then it would be quite absurd to fret, as it would plainly be no part of Christianity, and we should be all the better without it. But come, we do know it is here; let us not quit till we find the place."

So down they sat. Bible and Concordance were worked with zeal. They were determined to find it, *but they did not*. Hours after midnight found the husband and wife at their persevering search, and it was the brightening in the east that drove them to their rest.

Next day they set out to inquire among their friends, especially the clergy in the neighbourhood, but they found them all like their Rector; first, confidently appealing to a quoted passage, then to other passages, then asserting that one or all of these *meant* it, though none of them *said* it.

The subject dropped for the time; but on the next Sunday morning Brown felt greatly indisposed to go to the Sunday-school to teach. He told his wife so, and that it was because he doubted whether

the so-called orthodox doctrine was on that point true.

"It has been working in your mind, then," said she.

"All the week, and I am all doubt."

"All the week too with me, and I have no doubt."

"What! Does not all the might of evidence against this doctrine shake your faith in it, that you have no doubt?"

"Shake? no; overthrow it. I have no faith in it; no doubt about it. It is not in Scripture."

"But if you let this out, they will say you are no Christian, so supremely do they hold this doctrine."

"*They will say!* and will that make me no Christian?"

"I feel great dread in questioning what is said to have been held by Christians from the very early days of Christianity. It almost seems as if so old a doctrine must be true, if, as they say, it was held even in the days of the Apostles," said he.

She replied—"If *they say* it was so, *perhaps* it was; but does that prove its truth? Did Paul indorse all the doctrines held by the Churches he wrote to? Did

the Apostle John affirm all the doctrines held by the Churches mentioned by him?”

“You are right. Some of the most false doctrines evidently prevailed extensively in those days; but have not good and holy men since then sifted the wheat from the chaff, so that where there is an acknowledged Church there is almost certainty of a true doctrine?”

“That a Christian Church implies true doctrine in that Church is plain; but it does not follow that error is not mixed with that truth. The Apostles to whom I referred, admitted that the congregations they spoke of were Christian Churches, yet they entirely condemned some of their doctrines.”

“Is it not curious,” added the wife, “that I, who was so hard to be convinced by you not very long ago, that we should appeal to Scripture and not to human authority, should now be found urging upon you the superior authority of the Bible?”

“Yes, curious it is; but I now see what escaped me before: I see what it was that conquered you, and is now conquering me, in spite of prejudices and old strong attachments. *It is not the mere authority*

of the Bible, but the power of the truth which it utters that avails. And this does by no means overthrow the authority; nay, it establishes it upon immovable foundations. I naturally, and I think rightly, struggled against anything that might make me change my views of so important a matter as that which we have been considering; but I am beaten, and if I were to be excommunicated for it, I must hold to that truth which, revealed in Scripture, shines in its own brightness, as God's own truth with power. Yes; Scripture not only fails to support the generally held position, but it asserts repeatedly the opposite, what is so entirely in accordance with the general tenor of Scripture, and so bright and excellent in itself. It is a new light *to me*, though it has been shining in the very face of our Saviour all the time.

"But," added Brown, after a pause, "what will the Rector say? How can I go to church and seem to assent to all that is there uttered, while I not only doubt but dissent from a matter held so important?"

"That is another question, and, I admit, a difficult one; I would not separate from those with whom I

love to worship, and especially not from those to whom I look up with reverence, and to whose care and teaching I owe so much; I would not separate myself from them at all, because I am forced to differ from them even in so weighty a matter."

"But would you pretend to agree with them? And is it not a pretence of agreement when one goes to join in utterances which express what one does not assent to?"

"I would at all events make the Rector aware that I not only had not been brought to put away the doubt about which we spoke with him, but that that doubt had, by the power of the truth, been turned into certainty, and then I hope I should be guided into a straight, uncompromising path, and be strengthened to walk in it."

"Well, you women are very strong, some of you, where men are but weak. You are right, my wife. I acknowledge that I feel half afraid to open this matter to him, but I have no fear if once we began to discuss it. What if I write to the Rector, and say that the matter stands with me as it does? We shall see then what he will say."

"I agree with you ; it will be the best way. Write, and pray that it may be for good."

So Brown wrote to the Rector, and received an answer expressive of the clergyman's sorrow that Brown was not *yet* convinced of his *mistake*, and an invitation at the same time to dine at the Rectory on Friday, and talk over the matter.

In the meantime Brown did not go either to church on that Sunday when he had the conversation with his wife, nor to the Sunday-school.

The Friday came in due time, and Brown dined with the Rector. There was no lady but the Rector's wife, and she withdrew as soon as dinner was over.

The Rector's curate was there, and a clergyman, a dean from some distance, a well-known writer upon religious subjects.

Brown saw that he was to fight against all these, and dreaded the Curate most. He was an excellent young man, who had been three years in the parish, and won the esteem and goodwill of all classes ; and the result was, that a certain section of the congregation, a large and influential one, made him a kind of pope : his declaration was considered infallible, and

whoever ventured to question was looked upon as an heretic.

All three were well read in religious lore, and highly to be respected for blameless and useful lives.

As soon as they were alone, the Rector opened the subject.

"Our friend Mr. Brown," said he, "has some misgivings as to a particular doctrine" (which he stated) "being orthodox; I have asked him to meet us here that he may be clearly convinced, and his mind set at ease on the subject."

"Oh yes," added the Dean, "he may indeed set his mind at ease upon the subject, for there is no room for the smallest doubt upon the matter."

There was a minute's silence. The Rector was obliged to come in again, but only remarked:

"Not the smallest—no room whatever."

Again there was a pause. The Curate looked as if he was anxious to speak, but said nothing. The Dean looked at him, and said, "Were you going to say something, sir?"

"I was going, but perhaps I had better not."

"No, no, young man," said the Dean, "don't be too

modest. We should like to hear your observations. Your words may have more effect with a man of your own age than a dry argument from older lips. Speak out, my friend."

"Do so," added the Rector.

"I only was going to observe, that it can hardly be said there is no room for the smallest doubt, when my friend here, who I am sure considers the matter most seriously, has grave doubts."

Dean and Rector looked rather taken aback; but the Dean soon recovered his self-possession, and said, "Right sir, very right, I see you did not like to put two seniors in the wrong; and you were right there too; but being urged by us you could not help it, and we feel it so."

The Rector did not seem quite to see it so.

The Dean continued:—"It gives us a disadvantage in the argument, that we have, as it were, advanced our skirmishers without due support. Well, there is, however strange it may seem—there is room to doubt, for Mr. Brown doubts. Come then, in the most friendly way let us discuss. Allow me to ask Mr. Brown what has led him to doubt in this case?"

Brown related the circumstances. The four men were well skilled in the knowledge of the Scriptures. Brown insisted on keeping to the question, *What does the Bible say?* The Dean and the Rector made several attempts to bring the words of commentators and of generally accepted authority to bear on the subject. And when Brown had repeatedly rejected all such evidence as not bearing upon the question, "*What does the Bible say on the subject?*" he was again assailed with rather an overwhelming quotation from a writer denouncing the view which Brown showed was the utterance of the Scripture; and Brown was slow in repeating his so often-repeated shield-question, "*Nevertheless what saith the Scripture?*" The Curate, without being checked either by the age or rank of the others, burst out with, "Right or wrong, it is too bad to try to conquer a man by a trick like that. The Bible does say what we three hold, I am sure it does, though I can't remember the place now. Give a man fair play, or else——"

"*Mr. Curate!* MR. CURATE!!" said the Rector, in an imposing voice.

Mr. Curate stopped short, his face was red, and he

breathed hard. He was that sort of an Englishman who would not stand by and see his enemy unfairly conquered; and as Brown seemed to him too submissive, and the others too much bent on riding him down, his courage got ahead of his prudence, and he spoke out.

However, he saw his fault. The Dean hastened to the rescue, and apologized for his warmth, so as to mitigate the Rector's ire. It was not *his* curate who had forgotten himself, and instead of standing by his chief like a doughty squire, had rather handed a weapon to the opponent; so the Dean was the cooler.

He saw nothing was to be expected from that day's argument, so he said, "My friends, enough for one evening; meet me at the Deanery at dinner on Tuesday, and we will try to bring the question to an issue. It is a long drive, but I hope you all three will take beds in my house."

The plan was accepted, and the question deferred till Tuesday.

Brown's wife, when he retailed the evening's discussion, said—

"Just what I should have expected. Can you think

a. Dean and a Rector could see through uncoloured spectacles? They are both good men, too good to give up what they verily believe to be orthodox doctrines, and this doctrine they have held so long, that it will be hard to root it out."

"But, wife, they profess to hold it from Scripture. How can they honestly say they do so if they can't find it in Scripture?"

"Ah! there is a way. While you were at the Rectory, I turned over several commentators on the subject. One of them, a Bishop, states the usually held view, and then that which we have been of late led to see is the one affirmed in Scripture. The Bishop sees that it is expressly so stated in the Bible, and quietly disposes of it, saying, 'It means the same thing!' As well might he affirm that '*I love you*' and '*you love me*' means the same thing. See, here is the passage."

"Well, after that!"

"Yes," said the wife, "after that you may expect to find that learned, good, and conscientious men, looking through their own pet spectacles, see things in a curious fashion, and then conscientiously speak

accordingly; so don't be too much surprised, and do not too much condemn either Dean or Rector."

In a very earnest temper, but in very good humour, Brown left his wife on Tuesday to dine with the Dean.

As was to be expected, the Dean had chosen his company for the occasion; two clergymen besides the Rector and Curate were among the guests, only one layman besides Brown. The Dean's wife, with three other ladies, made up the party.

Of course nothing was said on the subject till the ladies had withdrawn from the dining-room. Then the Dean, in a very courteous manner, opened the campaign.

"Has your friend Mr. Brown," said he to the Rector, "had any farther talk with you on the subject of our late conversation?"

"No," replied he; "I have not seen Mr. Brown till I had the pleasure of meeting him this evening."

Then addressing Brown, the Dean said: "I have mentioned the subject of that conversation to my two friends here, wishing to have the benefit of their deep experience and learning, not to make the matter clearer

to myself, but hoping that we might, by our united argument, be able to show you, sir, where you have allowed yourself to be misled or confused by some clever argument or specious writing, which I have no doubt has worked upon you to turn you from the orthodox view."

"I beg your pardon," replied Brown, "I have never read any book on the subject, nor heard the matter questioned till I made it a subject of question. No doubt others may have argued or written upon it, but I have never met with one such."

"Where then," rejoined Mr. Thompson, one of the clergymen, "did you pick up such an heretical notion as this, which my friend the Dean tells me you have ventured to promulgate?"

Brown was a little thrown off his centre by the manner in which he was addressed, and replied rather sharply: "Sir, I did not pick it up. I learned it where I did not seek it, in my BIBLE."

"That is not so!" exclaimed Mr. Thompson; "the Bible teaches the orthodox doctrine on the subject."

The increased incivility of his opponent nettled Brown, who said; "It is little use to argue with those

who say, 'The Bible says so and so,' but who are careful not to appeal honestly to the Bible."

"Let us open the Bible!" cried the Curate, bringing upon himself a look of astonishment from the Rector, and a stare of mingled fear and contempt from Thompson.

"Yes," added Brown; "hand me your pocket Bible. I know you always have it with you."

Then addressing the Dean, he proceeded: "Perhaps the gentleman who speaks so very strongly will please to point out the passages upon which he rests."

The Dean passed the book to Mr. Thompson, who in a dictatorial and triumphant tone read one of the passages which had first occurred to Brown when the difficulty arose in the school, and had afterwards been quoted by the Rector, and shown not to assert or prove the position it had been brought forward to support.

"Has the gentleman any other passage which corroborates the support which he says this gives to his side of the argument?"

"To be sure!" shouted Thompson. "Twenty! Here."

And he read two or three of those which had been quoted at the Rectory.

Brown had now recovered his coolness, and said quietly to the Rector: "Say, my dear sir, as an honest inquirer into the utterances of Scripture, do any of these passages, all of which we lately considered together, contain an affirmation, or seem to do so, of the view I have questioned? And do not some of them affirm the view I have proposed?"

The Rector was silent in deep thought for a little while; then he replied: "So solemn a question has not been put to me since my ordination, and I dare neither refuse to answer, nor equivocate in my reply. These passages do not contain the proof which the questioned doctrine requires for its firm support. And they do (some of them at least) seem to say rather what you propose as the right view. We must look farther and deeper for clearer and better proofs of the undeniable orthodoxy of the view held by the Church."

Thompson put his hand upon the mouth of the other clergyman, who was going to speak, saying, "Let me!" Then with a very red face and angry expres-

sion of countenance he said to the Rector, "That's not the way with heretics. You half give up the point. You are weak, vacillating, miserable. Let me! —Let me!" cried he louder.

The Dean, who was a thorough gentleman, was evidently excessively discomposed by Thompson's violence and uncivil proceeding. He got up from his chair, saying,

"This will never do. Come, Mr. Brown, let us join the ladies in the drawing-room. Mr. Thompson, we have had discussion enough for one evening. Come, my friends."

Growling, Thompson followed into the drawing-room. The ladies were in deep conversation, evidently excited.

"What are you discussing?" said the Dean, good-humouredly, to his wife.

"Oh, my dear, we have had our convocation as you have had yours; and as you must needs inquire the subject, it was just the same as you discussed among yourselves."

"How?" cried the Rector. "Do you ladies make yourselves judges of orthodoxy?"

"Nay, my good sir, we only humbly searched to see what the Bible says."

"Well, and what has your seeking discovered?"

"Very little, I confess. Just these three texts seemed to be to the purpose," said she; "but when they are examined,—no, it is not by examination that it appears,—but when they are just plainly read, they have quite the *wrong* meaning."

"Ladies and gentlemen," cried Thompson. All were silent. Thompson took a book out of his pocket. "I see it is necessary to settle this matter at once, and to nip heresy in the bud. Already I perceive a kind of leaning towards Mr. Brown's view. It cannot be endured. One word must settle it all; and knowing the stiff-neckedness of those who once allow themselves licence, such as he has taken, in questioning unquestionable doctrines, I came here prepared to lay before you that which must decide the question, and leave no room for two opinions upon the meaning. Listen, then, while I read."

"What chapter and verse?" cried the Curate, taking out his Bible to follow Mr. Thompson's reading. "I knew," added he, "it was to be found somewhere." Then looking up to Thompson, "Where is it, sir, if you please?"

"Pooh!" said Mr. Thompson; adding contemptuously, "Pray mind your own business, young man."

"Listen," continued he; "no one here will dare impugn what I shall now read."

Then opening his book, he said, "This is the Book of the Constitutions and Canons Ecclesiastical, treated upon by the Bishop of London and Bishops and Clergy, and agreed upon with the King's licence in Synod. London, 1603.

"Hearken, all! Hearken, Mr. Brown! '*Whosoever shall maintain that the Prayer-Book contains anything contrary to Scripture, let him be EXCOMMUNICATED ipso facto.*'

"Now, Mr. Brown, see where you stand!

"Now, ladies and gentlemen, see where you are in danger of standing if you dare to question.

"The matter in debate is, you must all see, clearly declared in the Prayer-Book.

"As clearly, Mr. Brown's view maintains that it is contrary to Scripture.

"He is not liable to be excommunicated; but if he maintains the ground he has taken, HE IS EXCOMMUNICATED! and so are all who hold with him."

All were silent, till the demonstrative Curate said, tolerably loud, "Popery!"

The Dean pressed in with his word, saying—

"Ah! my good sir, these things are obsolete."

"Obsolete! Pardon me," said Thompson. "These canons have not only never been repealed, but they are published, and laid before the public in your cathedral and collegiate churches and chapels to this day, in the large Prayer-Books.

"I say, then, he who *maintains* Mr. Brown's views is excommunicated, and no clergyman can treat such a one as a member of a Christian Church.

"I ask, then, Does Mr. Brown maintain his views, or does he humbly admit his mistake?"

Brown in a decided voice said,—

"Show it me in Scripture, and I humbly admit my error."

Thompson replied arrogantly,—

"Sir, it is no question of our showing you, but of your humble and unqualified submission."

They all looked at one another, all surprised, some terrified.

The Dean, collecting his senses and coming to the rescue, said,—

“No, no; this won't do. In my house I will have none of this.”

“Mr. Dean,” said Thompson,—“Mr. Dean, I have said my say; I have crushed the heresy, and, if needful, the heretic too. You can't gainsay what I have read from the Book of Canons and Constitutions Ecclesiastical. I see I have displeased some and pleased none, so I withdraw. Good night, ladies and gentlemen.”

They breathed something easier when he was gone.

The Dean came up to Brown.

“Mr. Brown, allow me to apologize to you for the seeming rudeness of my guest. He is a man of strong opinions, and a great stickler for ecclesiastical powers and their exercise. I am sure he only did what he considered his painful duty, and acted conscientiously. I am truly sorry such a scene should have been acted in my house.”

“But tell me, sir,” said Brown, “is it true that such canons remain unrepealed, so that a clergyman is not justified in admitting to communion

any person under the ban of such an ecclesiastical censure?"

"Oh, my dear sir, practically those canons are obsolete. They are never put in force, nor in any way used."

"But," replied Brown, "I remember that, not so very long ago, there was a law permitting a person in certain cases, when found guilty of murder, to appeal to wager of battle, and even to fight it by proxy, if I do not mistake. The law was what you call *practically obsolete*, yet when appealed to it was found *not to be repealed*. Unwillingly the courts had to admit it, and the murderer escaped. If the lawyers and judges were bound by such a law, because unrepealed, much more ought the clergy to be by a canon ecclesiastical."

"You plead against yourself, Mr. Brown, as, believe me, few would plead in earnest against you. Besides, if this were in force, how many hundreds would be cut off from Church privileges? It would never do."

"But still I see and I feel a great difficulty," said Brown. The Rector and all the company gathered round, showing much interest in the conversation.

"If such is the existing law ecclesiastical, and if—mind, I say *if*—it is promulgated in our highest places of worship——"

"I saw it!" cried the Curate. "I saw it in the large Prayer-Books in the College Chapel, when I was at Cambridge a year ago. I happened before service began to open the book at the place."

"Well," continued Brown, "supposing it so, I cannot see that a man is right in going to claim Church communion and fellowship with those whose rules exclude him, or in leading a clergyman blindly to admit him where, if his views were known, he must necessarily be excluded."

"You are too punctilious, my friend. It is not supposed that the clergy are to know all the crotchets and fancies of those who come to church," said the Rector.

"Perhaps not; but he that comes, knowing that matters stand thus, is, I think, inexcusable. In short, will you, Mr. Dean, and you, my worthy Rector, say that, holding the opinion I have not hesitated to declare, and which I see, and you see, impugns the agreement, in that point, of the Prayer-Book with

the Bible,—will you, I say, tell me that that canon does not touch me, and that I am at liberty to claim all the privileges of a member of the Church of England, my contradiction in this notwithstanding; in short, that I am not excommunicated *ipso facto*, let the canons thunder as they may?"

Both were silent.

"I will lay the whole case before the Bishop," added Brown.

"Nay," said the Dean, "hear me. Let me draw up a case, as of A. B., giving no name nor clue to identity. The Bishop will doubtless give the matter the best consideration, and, having consulted the highest legal and ecclesiastical authorities, he will give a decision."

"I agree," said Brown.

"To-morrow, then, we will draw up the case in my study before you leave us."

The conversation then became general; but the topic had taken such hold that one subject engrossed the company.

"That Mr. Thompson!" said one lady; "he would stop all mouths with his constitutions and canons."

"And fetter all thought," said the Curate.

"He half convinces me," said another, "that Mr. Brown's heresy is orthodox."

"A bad argument," said the Curate, "that because Mr. Thompson is wrong, Mr. Brown must be right."

"But have you not some inclination to side with Mr. Brown?"

"No," replied the Curate, "not in his opinion; but 'yes' against ecclesiastical tyranny."

"Well," said the lady, "will you then, for my advantage, tell me truly what passages make against Mr. Brown's views, and what passages for them? Here," added she, "is a Concordance. You have paper and pen in your room, and I put it upon your conscience as a clergyman, don't go to bed till you have put down all the texts you can find to the purpose. I am quite serious; I really want to be convinced one way or the other."

The Dean at length succeeded in drawing the conversation into another channel, which kept the company amused or interested till bed-time.

In the morning, when the lady who had urged the Curate to give her the quotations which were to con-

tradict Brown's heresy came to breakfast, the Curate, pale and worn-looking, acknowledged that he had spent the whole night over his Bible and Concordance without being able to find one text which he could honestly bring as a proof. "Plenty," said he, "presented themselves to me; but on examination I was obliged to admit that *the sense I wished to find had to be put into them*; and though most commentators and critics do put that meaning into them, I felt that then it is the commentator or the critic, and *not the Bible*, that gives the decision I seek."

"You are very hard to please," said the Rector, "if what satisfies commentators and critics will not satisfy a curate."

"Nay," replied the Curate, "I agree with these; but when I am asked to give a text or texts which prove a certain doctrine, can I in any honesty try to impose a text, with clerical authority, as settling the question, when I know it is capable at least of another meaning, and one as much agreeing with the impugned doctrine, as the sense in which I take it opposes that?"

"If you are so particular," said the Dean, "I fear

you will have to drop half the orthodoxies which are most strenuously insisted upon in the Church."

"I dare not be less particular," answered he. "It is not a mere question of argument, but of honestly dispensing God's truth."

"Do you then, sir," said the Rector sternly, "agree with Mr. Brown in his opinion, which I must call heretical? And do you assert that the matter as stated in our Prayer-Book is contrary to Scripture?"

"Neither the one, sir, nor the other. I hold distinctly to the view taken in the Prayer-Book; but I confess I cannot now hit upon any text which is decisive on our side."

Brown now put in a word, and said, "And can you, or any one here present, venture to affirm that this text" (pointing to it in the large Bible on the Dean's table) "does not plainly assert the truth of what I have affirmed."

"Oh, but you must explain one text by another, and not take isolated bits of Scripture," said the Dean.

"Quite right," said Brown. "Tell me, then, the other by which you will show that this one is to be

so modified and turned about that it shall say what you want it to say."

Two or three texts were mentioned, but it was acknowledged on all sides that none affirmed the thing desired except when modified according to the idea prevailing. Not one was found which could be taken in one sense only, and that the sense sought for by all but Brown, who held resolutely to his position, saying he was sure they could find none such. And certainly that day none was found.

Brown retired with the Dean to draw up the statement to be laid before the Bishop.

It was a work of a quarter of an hour, and merely asked the question, Whether a person who had belonged to the Established Church was to be considered (by the clergy especially) excommunicated, and to be refused the privileges of a member of a Christian Church, if he asserted and maintained that anything in the Book of Common Prayer was contrary to Scripture?

The Bishop answered, without much delay, that when a case was brought before the proper authorities, no doubt it would be properly decided. In the

meanwhile, he supposed the matter must rest between each person and his own conscience. And if a man knew that by the ecclesiastical canons he was under the ban of the Church, he should act accordingly ; as should also each clergyman, with discretion, in any case which he might be aware of. But the Bishop added, that he did not say that it was any clergyman's duty to search out curiously any differences of opinion that might exist among his flock.

This was not very satisfying to a mind as anxiously conscientious, and at the same time as clear and resolute, as Brown's. After some consideration, he resolved to remove with his family to some place where his absence from church on Sundays would not cause remark, and where he could quietly, and without being pressed or hurried, make up his mind as to the path he ought to follow.

His wife was of the same advice, and they selected Edinburgh as a place suitable to their purpose, where they could enjoy also the advantage of good society, both of religious and literary people.

Brown had been some weeks at Edinburgh when he met with his college friend Smith, as we have seen.

CHAPTER IV.

“NOT THAT WE HAVE DOMINION OVER YOUR FAITH,
BUT ARE HELPERS OF YOUR JOY.”

IN one of the southern counties of England resided the old-established family of Rookhurst, one branch of which had adhered, at the Reformation, to the Romish religion.

Like many families in similar circumstances, the Rookhursts of Rookhurst continued to live for generation after generation on their patrimonial estate, neither decidedly rich nor at all poor—very respectable, and highly respected by the few who knew them. They mixed little in society. The younger sons generally went into foreign service, chiefly in Austria, some in Spain, and always one was dedicated to the priesthood. The daughters were educated partly at home, and often in part at some French convent, which issued in not a few of them at various times preferring a

conventual life to the solitude of Rookhurst, and almost every generation gave one of the daughters, often even two, to the veil.

In the generation of which we speak here there were five sons and three daughters. The second son had been dedicated to the tonsure from his birth, and named Dominic. The eldest lived with their father. All the sisters were educated at home.

Dominic fulfilled the desires of his parents, and from the earliest age showed both considerable talent and decided religious tendencies. He soon began to look forward to his holy calling as the highest happiness and privilege which a man could enjoy upon earth.

He studied first at home under a tutor with his brothers, and afterwards at a Spanish University. Both with his tutor and at college he was distinguished for his progress in all branches of learning, but still more by a depth of feeling, an acuteness of conscience, and a simplicity which was far removed from weakness, but which could not accept a deceit as possible to be acted upon—a character his was of cleverness without guile.

This peculiarity puzzled his tutor much, Jesuit

though he was. Dominic saw with a glance the purpose of his teacher—saw often how some use of a road not quite straight seemed likely to gain a step towards an end which they both admitted to be good; but nothing could persuade the pupil to even consider the expediency of a crooked way. It was enough for him that it was crooked.

Pearson, his tutor, said often to old Mr. Rookhurst, "If that boy can be brought to reason, he may do anything, but he is so obstinately firm in his own way that I can make nothing of him."

Without being vain or conceited Dominic Rookhurst was quite aware of his superiority to almost all his companions in the college. His simplicity saw the fact, and simply took it as a fact. He rejoiced that he had the riches of talent and learning to lay upon the altar of his God. He knew no other value in either but as they rendered him able better to serve God and man.

In due time he passed through all the necessary steps, and the time approached for his being ordained and taking the vows of a priest.

His attention to the precepts and obedience to the

rules set before him were perfect. He did not carry the mortifications and penances to the extremes which some devotees practised, but he fulfilled all that was required, and, to be quite sure, was careful to go a little beyond this.

But in his inmost soul the working was intense. When he began to realize to himself what he was going to do, he applied himself to the Bible with the most ardent, urgent prayer that God himself would teach him. He compared each matter connected with the priestly office as set before him by the Catholic Church in all the books which had been given him to study with the words of the Bible. A fermentation was caused in his mind which he could not account for. He betook himself to a zealous priest and teacher of great repute, and told him how it was with him. This man assured him nothing was more common for young men in his position. But Dominic said that, common or uncommon, he must fathom it. The books given to him, he said, all professed to honour the Bible as the foundation of Christian truth, yet he could not find some of their dogmas in the Bible.

His experienced friend to whom he had applied told him he must take those books on the authority of the Church.

"Do you not know," said he, "that the Church has authority in all matters of religion?"

"Certainly," humbly replied Dominic; "and that authority you tell me is given in the Bible."

"Certainly, I say too," answered he; "so you, who, I know, so revere, love, and study your Bible, will submit to that Church and that authority which the Bible ordains."

"Certainly again. But——"

"No 'buts,' young man. These 'buts' are the very stepping-stones to damnable heresy."

"If you, sir, will not hear my difficulties, you assuredly cannot give me advice; and I cannot lay those before you without the use of the language to which you so vehemently object. I do not say '*but*' offensively; I merely mean to say that in my weakness and ignorance I cannot make some of the Church's dogmas and some of the Bible's doctrines agree."

"Ah, ah, my fine lad!" was the reply, "are you

there? Pray, great sir, do you suppose it is in the very least degree necessary that *you* should make these agree? You are to take what is given you, and be humble and thankful."

"A man cannot receive anything except it be given him from Heaven."

"Well; and what the Church gives, is it not from Heaven? A delicate palate you have got, young man, that cannot swallow anything but what nice morsels you select out of the Bible to please your fastidious taste. O boy! boy! you are in danger! Yes, I fear you are already possessed by the devil, which has led so many into crooked paths which end in perdition."

The idea of crooked paths ending in perdition so thoroughly agreed with young Dominic's own ideas and feelings, that when the old priest uttered these words in a tone of affectionate terror, the terror communicated itself to Dominic too.

The priest was in earnest. He saw before him a young man whose talents would be of the utmost use to whatever cause they might be dedicated. He dreaded lest they should be perverted and given to serve the cause which he believed to be false and

destructive. His own early education had been such as to teach him to bring every thought of his mind, every feeling of his heart, into absolute subjection to his will, and that will had been brought into most absolute subjection to a system which called itself "*The Church*;" and in that name claimed complete sovereignty over minds and hearts, on pain of the most mysterious and awful penalties here and hereafter.

Dominic felt himself in the hands of his master. For one who has gained, by any means and for any end, complete dominion over himself can exercise a wondrous mastery over the whole being of one who has not attained a high degree of self-command.

He trembled, threw himself at the feet of the priest, and cried, in the agony of his soul—

"O Father, tell me what I must do to be saved from this destroying spirit which drives me to such pernicious thoughts and questionings?"

"My son," replied the priest, "this devil must be driven out by prayer and fasting, by severe penance, on account of the sin of having allowed yourself to exalt your pride against the holy Church, and by

crushing down your spirit into the uttermost submission for all future times."

"Yes, Father, yes, I deserve it all, I require it all; I am a miserable sinner. Oh forgive me, and show me what I have to do, and I will do it all, and bless you, Father, though you order me to tear my flesh, and torture my heart! Oh, what is all that compared to sin and perdition?"

The result of Dominic's conference with this priest was that he went to Spain again, and put himself under the orders of a Jesuit, to whom his friend gave him letters.

This man confined him to his cell for a long time, allowing only very short absence for a solitary walk in the cloisters of the monastery daily. His food was bread and water; the scourge was freely used by the penitent Dominic, who hoped thus to atone for his presumptuous sin. He remained certain hours on his knees in prayer; other hours standing with his face to a wall meditating on a subject given to him by his confessor each day; and he spent hours besides reading many times over the penitential psalms, and repeating certain prayers.

He earnestly requested to be permitted to read some book to break the sameness of each day's course; but in vain. The wish was reckoned a sin, and additional penance prescribed.

So it went on for a year. At the end of that time it seemed as if Dominic's spirit was completely subdued. His confessor gave him a book of the lives of saints, allowing him to read it for half an hour daily; but after a few days he found it a trouble, not a recreation, and he returned mechanically to his unbroken routine.

His health had failed much. From being a florid, muscular youth, he had become pale, thin, and bent. His eye, which had beamed with intelligence, was without lustre or meaning.

When, in confession, he told that he did not read the book permitted to him, he was ordered to read it.

He read submissively.

He read the Life of Loyola.

The effect was very different from what his confessor intended. It wakened the sleeping spirit. The brain, weakened by the inert state in which it had been kept, was now filled with the wildest imagina-

tions. At one time he thought he was a saint like Ignatius, called to found a new order; at another he was persuaded that the demon who had possessed him put that idea in his head in order to lead him into presumption and sin, and then he was convinced that he actually was himself the demon.

These imaginations, and others of similar nature, wrought in his mind; but the last was the prevalent impression—

He was mad!

When his confessor came one day to hear and absolve him, he leaped upon the old man, rolled the rug which covered him at night round his head so that he could not cry out, took off his garment and hood and put them on himself; and, leaving him lying bound on the ground, Dominic left his cell, carrying a bundle containing the clothes he wore when he entered the monastery; locked the cell door, and walked unsuspected out of the gates into freedom.

He had no idea what he was going to do, or whither he purposed to bend his course; he had had nothing to do with ideas or purposes for many months. However, he changed his confessor's dress for his own, throwing

the first into a thick bush in the forest, and instinctively pursued the path by which he had a year and a half before approached the monastery. He never knew whether he was pursued or not, nor what became of the confessor. He could give no account of himself at all.

One day as old Mr. Rookhurst was returning to his house with one of his daughters, a pale, wasted being was observed following them. As they walked slowly he overtook them, and said, "Good evening, father!" Rookhurst started. The voice was Dominic's, but the face, the figure, were utterly unlike his. His sister, however, saw her brother even in this changed appearance, and cried out, "Dominic! Dominic! What—what is this? Where have you been? What is the matter?"

"Nothing at all is the matter. I just went out to take a walk before dinner, and I am going home. I will go with you."

His father could not believe that it was Dominic. "Take care," said he, whispering to his daughter; "it is a madman—come away."

But the sister was sure. She saw, indeed, that he was not only squalid and diseased, but that he was

insane. She had presence of mind to conquer her terror and conceal her agony of grief, and whispered to her father, as Dominic went on before them—

“It is himself, father; he is out of his mind; don't seem to notice it, and he will come with us, I feel sure.”

And she was right.

They came to the house. Dominic went at once into the drawing-room; his sister ran to call her eldest brother, Christopher; told him quickly all she knew, and sent him into the room where Dominic was.

When he came in Dominic said coolly, as he rose from a chair before the fire, “Ah, Christopher, I thought you were out, the fire is let so low. Who's that?” cried he, as he caught a view of himself in the glass over the mantelpiece. “Who is that miserable black-guard? What is he doing here?” Then turning about, and seeing nobody but his brother, he burst out laughing, and said, “I fancied I saw such a horrid-looking fellow. I was frightened. Curious! is it not? Ah! there he is, though; look!” as he faced the glass again. Turning quickly he made a dash at the place where he supposed the intruder to be, and striking

against a table he fell at length upon the floor, **too** weak to get up again unassisted.

Christopher raised him and laid him **on** a couch. He lay unresisting, exhausted.

Presently he opened his **sunken** eyes. "I am very hungry," murmured he.

Christopher **made** a sign to his sister, who had come into the **room**; she ran and fetched biscuits and wine. He **took** a little, turned on his side, and fell asleep.

There was immediately a consultation. First the family doctor was sent for, then they thought over what they had heard and seen. It appeared as if Dominic thought he had only gone out just before, and was returning naturally home, so they determined to get his own room ready as quickly as possible, and to move him sleeping if they could to his own bed.

His heavy sleep favoured their plan; he only partially wakened as his brother and a servant undressed him. His state made them shudder; his clothes and his person were filthy. They could at the moment do little to render him cleaner, but they placed him in his own bed, where he slept soundly.

The doctor came, and found him sleeping. He said

that, as far as he could judge, nothing ailed him as to bodily health, except prostration of strength from absolute starvation: of his mind he could, of course, form then no opinion.

They all knew that he had gone in a depressed and excited state of mind to Spain, but only guessed why, and never had heard of him since his departure.

Mrs. Rookhurst had been dead some years, and the eldest sister, Charlotte, kept house for her father.

Christopher had been at Eton, and afterwards at a Roman Catholic college in France. He was a fair mixture of English and French gentleman. From an early age he despised Dominic's religious feelings; looked upon them as superstitious and unmanly; courted the society of English and foreign free-thinkers, and thought himself one of them. He was, however, strictly moral, and decidedly benevolent; very affectionate, and beloved both by his relations and dependants. But he made no secret of his religious, or rather irreligious, opinions.

He said to the doctor, "Depend upon it, religion has turned the poor fellow's brain; I hope he will get the better of it by care and rest, and then give up his stuff

and nonsense. Can't a man be a good man and go to heaven without all this tackle and harness, not to mention whips and spurs? As sure as I believe there is a God, so sure am I that he never imposed religion upon us. I would not give you a fig for a God who would not make me a better man, instead of forcing me, as these fellows do, to spoil the life and mutilate the body He gave me, as I fear my poor brother has done."

Both father and doctor were too much occupied in mind about the patient to give much heed to Christopher's words; besides, they were accustomed to hear him talk so, and had found it no use to argue with him.

Dominic slept all night, watched by one after another. When the sun shone in at his window he moved, yawned, and opened his eyes; expressed no wonder at finding himself where he was, but asked Christopher, who was beside him, if he had overslept himself; then, stretching his arm out and seeing the colour and form of his filthy and lean limb, he cried out, "What is this? what can this be? O brother, brother! my dream has been a vision. I dreamed such horrible dreams last night; I tried so to waken, but I could not.

I dreamed the devils had got hold of me, in the shape of priests and monks; but devils could never do to poor sinners what I dreamed these did to me. Then they made me one of themselves—the devils did—and I flew away from the monks; but they made me so thin, and kept me so dirty, that I was like to go mad. And see, I am all shrunk in one night to a skeleton, and as filthy as if I had not washed for years, though my shirt, you see, is a clean one. Brother, it is a miracle sent to make me feel my sins; no one can doubt it now.”

Christopher could hardly keep from bursting out, he knew not which, into laughter ~~or tears~~. But poor Dominic's bodily state was at all events sad and plain. By the doctor's desire they had some light nourishing food ready, which he took greedily, and would have eaten more if they had permitted him. He then let them put him in a warm bath, lying in their hands like a child. He seemed to have forgotten all that he had said, and to be paralysed in mind, for he took no notice of any one or anything. The doctor said it was from prostration of all his powers, and forbade any attempt to rouse him. After the bath he took a few mouthfuls

of food, and again fell asleep for several hours, waking at long intervals and taking a little food, but not speaking nor seeming conscious of anything.

The second morning after his bath he awoke as he had done on his first morning after his return. Christopher was there looking at him.

"Ah, brother," said he, "are you there still? I fell asleep while I was telling you my dream. See—but I thought I had become so filthy as well as so lean—the filth is gone. Was I not all dirty? but I am thin enough at all events. It is a miracle. O brother, **take** warning by me! I only began to doubt. You have been **long** a free-thinker, and if this has happened to me, what will **become of you** if you do not submit?"

"Never mind now," replied Christopher; "we will talk of that again. I will get you some breakfast, and then you will be better."

Each time he wakened and took food he seemed to gain strength, and began to retain a power of consciousness for a longer term. But with this came sore distress of mind; he was terribly puzzled when he began to remember things, and to think. He could

not separate in his mind between what he knew were facts, and what he thought were visions.

He recollected at length that he had gone to Spain, and asked his brother if it was not so. But how did he come back? That was a sad puzzle. Every now and then he went back to the idea that the whole was a miracle to turn him from the sin of doubting or questioning. Then, without any apparent reason, he left that track, and would try to recall all the realities of his life, and often the consequence was that he fell into delirious ravings, begging for mercy, promising to scourge himself more severely, to do every penance with double rigour, if he might only be forgiven.

However, his young constitution triumphed at last, and his mind became clear and strong. He remembered and related all his sufferings; but how he had got from his prison to his father's house he never could tell.

Still he writhed under the sense of his sin, and was sorely troubled as to how to get rid of his doubts and questionings. And, in spite of his brother's endeavours to dissuade him, he betook himself to another priest, confessed to him, and besought his guidance.

This was a very different man from his first adviser. The latter was a sincere man, filled with horror at what he verily believed was destroying his penitent for ever. He would gladly have borne all the penance himself, or have died under the infliction, if he thought he could save the sinner by so doing ; and therefore his advice, his commands, had overwhelming power with such a temperament as Dominic's.

But Father Walsh was another sort of man—hard, unfeeling, despotic. His uppermost idea in religion was priestly authority. The saving point in his character, as concerned Dominic, was his uncontrollable, impetuous temper ; this made the man in all his deformity of character flash out through the priestly mask.

At first Dominic visited him, and at first Father Walsh gained terrible power over his victim. He was still feeble from his late sufferings, and made no resistance to the usurpation of absolute dominion over his faith and life, to which the priest laid claim.

Father Walsh, thinking himself quite master of one of the family, now had an ambition to rule them all. He told Dominic he would visit him at his father's

house; and as his word was law to his penitent, there was no objection made.

The priest made himself very agreeable to old Mr. Rookhurst and Miss Rookhurst, as well as to one of the sons who was at home. Christopher was absent in Paris amusing himself. Father Walsh was a man who knew the world; had travelled; was gentlemanly when not carried away by his temper, and that rarely happened, almost never, unless when his priestly despotism was strongly assailed, which it was not likely to be in the present company.

He gained more and more ascendancy over Dominic, and was in a fair way to become confessor and spiritual guide to the others, when after some months Christopher returned.

It was with more feelings than mere surprise that he saw the manner in which Father Walsh took his place at the dinner-table a few days after his arrival. He did not know that the priest was an expected guest every Tuesday and Friday. An unacknowledged feeling within them had prevented any of the family from mentioning it to Christopher; in fact, they were afraid both of priest and brother.

The priest, however, did his best to win upon his new acquaintance. He knew how to take measure of his man, and he so completely put the priest into the background this evening, and came out as the pleasant, accomplished gentleman, that Christopher was won upon. They discussed politics, even approached religion; and nothing could exceed the liberality of the opinions, not only in which Father Walsh acquiesced, but which he brought forward.

When he went away, the other remarked, "Now I half like that shaveling. But is he really a priest? I did not think a priest could be so liberal."

Dominic replied—"Brother, I have known many a priest as truly liberal as this man seems to be. It is a shame to take the least liberal to judge them all by. What body of men could stand that? But I must say if you, who were inclined to dislike Father Walsh, now really, as you say, half like him, I, who was inclined to hang myself upon him, and trust him unreservedly, do not half like him now. I doubt his honesty. Either he does not really believe all he has insisted upon with me, or his apparently lax notions expressed this evening are insincere and intended for you."

Christopher made no reply, but he secretly rejoiced to see that, whether Dominic judged right or not, his tone of mind was returning, and that he showed a vigour, native indeed to him, but, since his return, in abeyance.

The third day after, Father Walsh appeared again, and Christopher, on inquiry, found he was a regular guest on permanent invitation. This irritated him, but he smothered his feelings at first.

After dinner the priest took the same line as before ; but having remarked that he had gained a point upon the eldest son, he ventured a step further in religion, hoping to get his coil by degrees round an unwary victim.

But Christopher was a shrewd man and on his guard, and when the priest made a declaration which might be taken in a truly liberal sense, but which, if admitted as it was uttered, might bring the person who was led to admit it under a grievous yoke, by giving another direction to its meaning Christopher put the matter into words which expressed the liberal sense, and admitted no other, and put it to the Father whether that was what he meant.

"Not exactly," replied he, a little confused.

"Well, then," said Christopher, "do you mean this?"—putting it in the form which expressed the other possible meaning, and which made religion a system of slavery on the part of the people, and unlimited rule on that of the clergy.

"Yes," cried Dominic, "that is exactly the truth! Thank God, I, who am not a priest, nor ever likely to be fit for one, by bowing my neck to that yoke am free from all responsibility! I have only to obey without question, and to leave all doubt to heretics."

"Noble young man!" said the priest, who saw that he must take a decided position, and who knew that he was an experienced polemic, especially in this kind of warfare; "you have tasted and seen how evil and bitter a thing it is to doubt and to question. You see now how pleasant and peaceful is the path of those who, bending low before the sovereign power and authority of God in His priests, cast away all questionings, and approach what is divine in the ways and forms commanded by the holy Church."

Christopher felt a boiling within him, but kept it

down, and in a tone as much like submissive inquiry as he could make it, he asked—

“Now, sir, will you tell me, Are we to consider ourselves as approaching God when we approach a priest as such? and are we to come and prostrate ourselves, our reason, our thoughts, our feelings at his feet?”

Again Dominic answered—

“Yes, brother, yes; believe me, in that is the essence of true religion.”

Christopher could not bear this patiently; his face crimsoned, his eyes flashed, as he cried, “Poor deluded slave of priestcraft! are you a man who thus submit to degradation?”

“The Chinese monarch may indeed compel his slaves to approach his golden footstool licking the dust, prostrate, beating their heads against the ground, because he is a mighty despot, a brutal tyrant, and makes his subjects slaves.

“And shall one stand up in the name of the great God, and ape the Chinese tyrant in that name, and require even more abject forms of access to him—prostration of soul and spirit, of intellect and reason, before a man who sets up to be as God?”

"Man!" cried he, addressing the priest, "if you were indeed God, you could not claim this homage."

The priest waxed as red and as wroth as the squire. He replied in a voice of thunder—"Man! man! if I were the mighty God, I would make you lick the dust at my feet, and adore the glory of my magnificence from a depth of prostration not yet dreamed of. How else is God to be glorified? Why else are all the minute, difficult, laborious, painful rites appointed by which we draw nigh to God? For what else are we priests? Ay, if I were God, you, and such as you, should crawl and cringe before me for ages, before I would so much as notice you from the glory of my throne."

He choked with rage as he spoke thus. His furious heat served to cool Christopher, who now spoke quietly, and with cutting sarcasm remarked—

"Upon my word, Mr. Priest, you are a very fit representative of such a *beau idéal* of a divinity; only I should consider it rather a sketch of a sovereign of another dominion than heaven."

The company all looked confounded.

"Spare," whispered Dominic.

"Anathema!" shouted the priest. Then turning to Mr. Rookhurst he said, angrily, "Sir, do you allow Almighty God to be insulted in the person of His ordained priest in your house?"

Before his father could answer Christopher put in his word coolly.

"Pray, Mr. Walsh, how are we to know that you are a priest of Almighty God as you say?"

"How! how! I am, sir, I am, and I will make you know it, sir. Yes; the lash, the scourge of the holy Church shall reach you yet, and you shall be glad to be permitted to crawl at my feet, and ask my pardon for your presumptuous sin."

"How are you to know?"

"Eh! why, am I not a priest?"

"You *say* you are; I believe you must be. So are the priests of the bloody heathen idols; so were the priests of Baal; so I admit you to be a priest of the god you have so glowingly described, whoever he may be. He is not, however, my God, nor ever can be; so good night, Mr. Priest. Shall I open the door for you, sir?"

"O Christopher!" said his father, "remember he is a guest."

"I did forget, father; but as some are said when entertaining strangers to have entertained angels unawares, I fear you have unawares entertained—but I won't say what, as it might not be civil. Won't you stay, Mr. Walsh, and take a cup of tea? I shall not be a bit afraid of partaking with you for all that I think or say. No? Then good night, sir, and I heartily wish you a better priesthood."

So Father Walsh went.

"Brother, you were too violent," said Dominic.

"Who began to be violent?"

"But you insulted his religion and himself."

"But he insulted my religion and all of us. I know you count me irreligious, and so I am as to all your rites and ceremonies; but I believe there is a God, an Almighty Maker and Ruler of all, and it makes my blood boil to hear Him blasphemed as that fellow did. Why, his god is my devil—a rancorous, proud, being whose greatness is in making other beings to whom he gives existence degraded; glorifying himself by the contrast of their degradation, instead of a glory, *above* man's idea of glory, if possible, as much as that is *beneath* it. God forgive him, if he can be forgiven

who draws such pictures, and says, 'That is the true God, and I am His priest.'"

Christopher continued so to boil over that the others saw there was no use trying to pacify him, and they all retired for the night.

But not all to sleep. Christopher, indeed, soon was in deep repose, little troubled about a breeze with a priest when it was over.

But Dominic was much disturbed; and when the agitation which arose from the storm of violent debate subsided, he fell into deeper thoughts than had been his custom for a long time.

The idea of his reason and intellect being prostrated at the priest's footstool, at the Church's throne, or before the majesty of God, was brought before him as it never had been before. "They were given," thought he, "to me to use, and I am to glorify the Giver by not using them! Ay, true, not using them against Him; but that is not the point. Am I not to use them at all? Is the Church, is the priest to come between me and the free use of God's gift? Am I not to doubt or question?—Ah! my mouth may be stopped as to the question, but *can my mind*

be stopped as to the doubt? Can it be, except by rendering it inert, as a body is by an opiate? But then if I question, what or who am I to question? Reason. Can reason give light? I have heard *rationalists*, as they are called, talk of the light of reason. But no, it is irrational to talk of *the light of reason*, as if reason gave light. It is like the eye of the spirit; it does not give light, but, by light given, it sees truth, fact, reality. And because rationalists are so irrational as to think they can see by the light which reason supplies, am I not to use reason to see truth by the light which God supplies? As if, because one man is such a fool as to walk in the dark, saying, 'I trust to the light proceeding from my eyes,' I should be wise to shut my eyes at noon because they give no light! Yes; I see by the help of my reason, and by the light which God gives me to see by, that I must use my reason reasonably, and with God's help I will. I will submit myself, however humbly, to Father Walsh, and obey him if I can. He is my priest, for all that Christopher has said in his rage against him, and I am sure Father Walsh will require nothing of me that is unreasonable."

After these thoughts, and in the spirit of them, Dominic went to see Father Walsh.

The priest had felt that he had lost ground at Rook-hurst by losing his temper, and had given his opponent a great advantage over him. He was ready to go through much temporary humiliation to regain the influence thus lost, and Dominic found an easy task in his endeavour to pacify him. In fact the priest was overjoyed to find that he was forestalled, and that the overtures came from the other side, which he expected to find himself obliged to make.

For the present he avoided the subjects upon which they had so hotly argued, and gave his whole attention to pouring oil on the troubled waters.

Dominic, too, was glad to be let alone, and to indulge thoughts which grew and expanded more and more. He wondered that his infidel brother's ideal of God was so much more glorious than that of Father Walsh. He supposed he must have misunderstood him, and resolved to try to understand him better. Friday came—Father Walsh came to dinner. Christopher took care to dine out. Dominic had a quiet talk with the priest. The priest rejoiced at the

absence of his merciless foe, and thought himself sure of his old victim.

He opened the campaign with ability, and made his advances so wilily that Dominic was almost surrounded before he saw a foe advancing; but he did see it, and that with the clearness of an unsuspecting mind looking for truth with simplicity, when it detects a lie creeping in truth's habiliments.

"No, Father Walsh," said he, "the Church can hinder my questioning, but cannot hinder my doubting."

"But, my son, when the Church condemns doubt upon any point on which she has spoken, it is your duty not to doubt any more."

"Duty or no duty, Father, I do doubt; and all the penance and discipline I went through in Spain for doubting only made me doubt the more; and unless I were to lie to God, I must say I doubt; but I can crush my heart, and not question."

"Then do what you can, son, and when you have done that you will be able to do more."

"But what about the doubts, Father?"

"Never mind about them. I have more experience

than you, and I tell you they will die of themselves when you cease to question."

"So be it, Father."

Dominic could not help observing what a different man Father Walsh was whenever Christopher was absent. He never tried in his presence to domineer. He met his antagonist without any manifestation of ill-will, and apologized for losing his temper when they had disputed. Christopher admitted his excuse, and acknowledged that he had been too warm also; but added that he did not give up the point notwithstanding.

The priest did not take up the challenge thus thrown down.

Dominic wondered, for he had no doubt that he could overwhelm his brother with arguments.

Yet when he was alone, though he crushed his heart and silenced his questionings, his doubts rose like living things before him, and questioned him, though he would not question others.

All the arguments of Father Walsh, and of the others whom he had heard argue, rose up too in his mind; but before his doubts they were as pigmies

before giants. They were not able to hold the field against them in any degree.

"I do doubt more and more; yes, and I question too, though I do not utter my questions. He who sees the heart knows that '*Why?*' and '*How?*' are continually in my heart. Whom, then, do I question? Is it God? Dare I do that?—Dare I desist? No, I must question; I will—I must find the truth; where else shall I find it?"

So thought Dominic with himself. He felt as if he had seen God, and yet lived.

At confession all this came out.

"Worse and worse," said the priest. A heavy penance was to be the consequence, and an order to put away all such thoughts.

But they would not be put away. They came uninvited; they came, though repulsed; they would come.

Again they were confessed.

And again.

And again.

The priest became anxious, alarmed, angry. He saw his slave escaping. He scolded, he threatened.

All his penances were fully performed, yet the sin was as bad as ever,—worse and worse, as he cried out vehemently.

He threatened to send Dominic back to Spain.

He trusted too much to his power over the mind he had so much subjugated. Dominic sprung like a dog from the lash.

All the doubts which he had stifled rushed into his mind like a bursting fire. All the questions he had pent up gushed forth like an overflowing torrent. He did not utter them, but stedfastly replied :

“ No, Father Walsh.”

His coolness exasperated the other, who opened upon him with a volley intended to beat him out of the position he had evidently taken up ; but he as quietly repeated :

“ No, Father Walsh.”

The priest was struck dumb.

“ Father Walsh,” said Dominic, “ I give you all credit for sincerely desiring to save me from error. I thank you for the endeavour, and I thank God you have saved me from a great error. Your words have been like a two-edged sword ; but that sword

has cut with the edge you did not intend. Your own words have answered many of my questions, allayed many of my doubts, and I shall henceforth be free to doubt and to question too, and shall not feel that I have to confess either as a sin. But I do feel that it is a deep and destructive sin to hide our doubts and to stifle our questions. I shall search for my own doubts, and seek an answer to the questions they suggest, humbly, but with expectation, first from my God and His Word, then from my spiritual guide and his advice."

"Much advice you will get from me, presumptuous youth! when you put me in that humiliating position. No. Submit—submit—submit—or else dread the excommunication that hangs over presumptuous inquirers like you."

"Will you, then, not permit me to lay my doubts, my questionings, and the answers I have received, before you, Father, for your advice?"

"For my advice — after, as you say, you have received answers to your questions? I know what they are. I guess pretty certainly the answers. No; I have but one word, submit, or else——"

“ Or else what ? ”

“ Excommunication ! Yes ; think over my parting word—EX-COM-MU-NI-CA-TION ! ”

He did not quite count without reason upon the effect of his solemn and awful word. Dominic had been brought up in such fearful dread of a priest's curse, in such abject submission to a priest's assertion and teaching, in such prostration before priestly power, that although he was firmly convinced that he was right, and the priest wrong, he quailed.

“ Father — Father Walsh ! ” cried he, beseechingly, as the priest, with a stately step, left the room.

The priest saw his last shot had not been fired in vain. He deigned not to turn or to reply, but, leaving the room door open behind him, he went straight out of the house, confident that he should soon be sent for, and should see his victim on his knees before him.

But it was not to be so. Had he turned, he might have kept his seat on this refractory steed for a little while longer ; but he strained the bridle too tight, drew the bit too violently, and while sorely wounded,

he also released his victim ; the bridle broke, the galling bit fell, and a free course was before Dominic.

He was like a caged bird let free—did not know where to go, dreaded the wild birds around him, fled into the first cage he saw open, frightened at his freedom.

He appealed to his father. The old gentleman had never given a priest the power to bully him, for he never thought about such matters ; left all to the clergy as to forms and ceremonies. He did not, indeed, *believe* either in the efficacy of rites or the power of priests, but he questioned neither. He had good sense enough to see the grain of gold in a bushel of sand, and sincerely looked to his God to forgive his sins, and to teach and help him to be a good man ; and if he submitted quietly to a host of things in which he did not place any real confidence, he liked them because he had always been used to them ; and as he wore them lightly, they sat easy upon him, and did not gall.

He gave his son advice accordingly ; but Dominic had made advances which quite cut him off from the quietism which his father recommended. His

father thought him a little light in the head. However, he did not approve of Father Walsh's late demeanour or conversation, and the priest was made aware that when his company was desired he should be informed.

Dominic went to London with letters to some eminent clergy there. He opened his case to one and another. They each and all gave him the same counsel, which was to say nothing about his doubts. "Ay, but," said he ingenuously, "my doubts are, some of them, answered;" and the answers which he said had satisfied him were very unsatisfactory to his advisers.

They all hinted—and the best, too, of them said plainly—that if he dared openly to declare himself upon the subjects in question he must expect all that with which Father Walsh had threatened him.

But they all agreed that it was better to conceal his *errors*, as they called them; for, unless declared, they would only concern himself, and no one need be the wiser. His confessor, indeed, must know, but would, of course, not proclaim what he thus might learn.

"But," inquired the honest young man, "how shall I go to worship, and take part in the rites of religion, when I know that if the priests could see my heart they would be obliged to drive me away?"

"The priests," said his adviser, a dignitary and eminent clergyman,—“the priests can't see your heart. The matter will be at rest between you and God.”

Dominic had no more to say, but he was less than ever satisfied.

He tried to attend mass, but fled, saying to himself, “No; though the priest sees me not as I am, I see myself. I have no business here, where I am virtually excommunicated. And why? Because my mind will think, because my reason will judge, because my heart will feel, and because I must not let them—because I *must* of necessity do what by the Church's orders I *must not* do. Alas! I am then, of necessity, *under the Ban!*” Dominic fled, not mad, as he had fled in Spain, but yet haunted by the terrible idea,—“Under the Ban!” He went home; but when his father and sisters, and sometimes his brothers, went to mass, he excused himself and went to walk in the woods.

He was convinced he was right in his views as far as they went. He sometimes took counsel with his Bible, sometimes with books of devotion, or the lives of saints ; these two last constantly excited doubts and questionings, which the first answered, but often not as he expected or wished. He struggled to get back to his old standing-ground, but in vain.

The agitation of his mind wrought upon his health, and he became visibly weaker and paler. The doctor advised, as usual in such cases, change of scene and society.

Two young men of their acquaintance, about Dominic's age, were going to make a tour in the Highlands. One was a Catholic, the other a Protestant. One day visiting at Rookhurst, they proposed to Dominic to join them. His father caught at the idea ; all the family pressed it upon him, and he without difficulty allowed himself to be persuaded to leave a home where he was by no means comfortable.

Accordingly Dominic Rookhurst set out for a summer excursion with Howard and Wilkinson, who had both just left Cambridge, and were both Yorkshiremen, well educated, old friends, and moderately

tinctured with a certain kind of family religion. They seldom touched on the subject; and when they did, it was neither jesting with religion in general, nor cutting at each other's peculiarities in this respect. In fact they had not thought, and did not think much about it, but what little they did think was with reverence and respect.

They agreed to take the steamer from London to Edinburgh, and arrived safely on a Sunday morning. It was rather late when they had settled themselves at their hotel and breakfasted.

"By Jove, lads," said Wilkinson, looking at his watch, "it's twelve o'clock. Too late for church. But I don't know when your service is; maybe it's not too late for you."

It was a relief to Dominic when Howard said, "Oh yes, quite too late; ours is early, earlier than yours. So, '*viatoribus licitum*,' we must content ourselves with the excuse that we are travellers, and not answerable for our hours. Let us take a stroll. See, from our very windows, how romantic the view is. I guess that high rock is Arthur's Seat. I vote we go up to it and enjoy the view at once."

Up they went, and did enjoy the view, and felt so joyous on steady dry land after two nights on a rather rolling sea.

As the three mounted one of the heights which command a view of the Firth of Forth, they saw three others advancing towards them. There were at the time no other persons in sight.

When they came near the three whom they had observed, these were in such earnest conversation that they did not seem aware of our party, who had to step aside to let the others pass.

As they passed they lifted up their faces towards those who had courteously yielded "the crown of the causeway" to them, when Wilkinson cried out, 'Old Brown, by Jove!'

"Ah! Wilkinson! Who would have thought of meeting you here? How long have you been in Scotland?"

"A couple of hours. We are on a tour, and I only landed at Leith this morning with my two friends, Mr. Rookhurst and Mr. Howard. Allow me to introduce my old friend Mr. Brown. So, Brown, you are here. Did *you* only land this morning that you

are not in church? We were of necessity too late. I know you are mighty regular in that matter."

"My dear Wilkinson, I and my two friends,—let me introduce them, Mr. Graham and Mr. Smith,—we three, curious as it may seem, came *to church* here."

CHAPTER V.

“ HEAVEN IS MY THRONE, AND EARTH IS MY
FOOTSTOOL.”

“ To church *here* ? ”

“ Yes, my friend, to church even here.”

“ What do you mean by *coming to church* then ? ”
said Wilkinson.

“ What do *you* mean by coming to church ? ” re-
joined Brown.

“ Why, I mean going into a particular house to
hear a parson praying and preaching, as all Christian
folk are in the habit of doing on Sundays.”

“ And what do you think makes it a church ? ”

“ Oh, everybody knows that ; it is being conse-
crated by a Bishop.”

“ I don’t think your idea of a church is exactly
what either the Bible or the Church of England
Prayer-Book teaches. It is a congregation or assembly

of Christians that makes a Christian church, and the place or building, consecrated or not, is only called a church because of the people who assemble there."

"And do you expect a congregation here?" said Wilkinson. "I have heard of open-air preaching, and your friend looks like a preacher; is that what you are about? But I see no congregation assembling."

Graham said quietly, "*Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst.*"

"True," replied Wilkinson. "I never heard that text so literally applied before. So you three are a church. Is that it?"

"Yes, for want of a better. I see you are surprised; but look what a temple we meet in. If this congregation is small, yet we join heartily with all congregations which together make *the* Church of God. The temple in which we worship contains all the places of their worship."

"But why do you take this extraordinary way of going to church, instead of doing as ordinary Christians do?"

"In a word," said Brown, "because the ordinary

Christians will not allow us to worship with them ; that is to say, they make rules and enforce doctrines which make each denomination a close society, like a club ; and unless we assent, or profess to assent, to all their rules and doctrines, we are not accounted as one with them."

It is hard enough that they should not let a good man be one with them, though."

"You mistake," replied Brown; "I said they do not *account* one who does not assent to their rules as one with them; yet inasmuch as they are Christians I *am* one with them; and inasmuch as they worship the Father of our Lord Jesus I worship with them, though they exclude me from their *society*."

"How do you mean *excluded*? Are you excommunicated?—under the Ban?"

"Even so, my friend. This man and I are under the Ban; and this other is not disinclined to join with those who are thus cast out."

Howard looked rather alarmed; Rookhurst seemed agitated and anxious. Wilkinson continued:

"What the mischief have you done, Brown, that

you have brought this upon yourself? What crime have you committed? I can't believe it is anything very bad; you don't look like a bandit or a murderer. Nay, you are joking; it can't be as you say."

"Indeed, though, it is," said Smith. "If he had only been a great sinner, he need not have feared the Ban; but because he has doubted some of the dogmas taught in a certain book, and has appealed to the Bible in support of the truth which he professes to hold, he is under excommunication."

"Ah!" cried Dominic, "is that so? Tell me, tell me, sir,—tell me all about it,—I *want* to know; do not refuse me, or think me impertinent for thus urging you. If you knew what I have suffered from doubting, and from daring to find in the Bible the answers to the questions that arose in my mind, you would pity me."

Howard stared at Rookhurst, evidently astonished at his speaking thus to one who he assumed was not a Roman Catholic.

Dominic was so evidently in deep earnest, that both Brown and Graham at once were much interested. Of course they could not guess that his

religious profession differed from theirs; but they were drawn to him by the fellowship of suffering, which was indicated by the few words he had spoken.

"I will freely tell you all you desire as far as lies in my power," replied Brown; "and if we have partaken of similar troubles, we may perhaps have a share together of the same consolation."

"But, Brown," said Wilkinson, "you have shown us the temple and the congregation—the largest, grandest temple, the most glorious of all, and the smallest congregation that can well be said to be congregated—but the worship? The priest, the ritual, the preaching, where are they?"

"If we are two or three," replied Graham, "gathered together in His name, we acknowledge the *Great High Priest* in our midst, *really present*, though we see Him not. We worship, under His guidance, at the throne of the King of kings, and appeal to the heart of the Father Almighty, and to His faithfulness and truth. The High Priest, if we be His, makes us priests; the King of kings makes us kings; the Father Almighty places us as sons before Him; and if here

we have no humanly appointed pastor, no ritual made by man's devotion and care, we have the Bible, visibly to read, audibly to hear, and the Spirit of God, invisible to eye, inaudible to ear, but here, to lead into all truth. Without all this, what Church can rightly be so called? With all this, may we not, in difficult circumstances, do without the forms and rituals which may be helpful or needful in larger assemblies to maintain decency and order?"

Dominic and Howard both were extremely agitated, especially the former.

Wilkinson, upon whom Howard leaned, feeling him tremble, asked if he was unwell.

"No," said Howard, "but I wish I was out of this place, away from these terrible men. They talk of God, and of Jesus, and of the Holy Spirit, as if they were friends present with us; they speak of the Real Presence as if it were here! I can't bear it. It is awful, horrible profanation of holy names and holy things! I am not particular, you know—I can sin like another—but I can't stand this. Let us go away and leave them."

"I am too much interested, and my curiosity quite

too much raised, to be of your mind," replied Wilkinson. "You can go if you like, but I will stay. I daresay Rookhurst will go with you; he seems as bad as yourself."

Howard appealed to Dominic. "Come—come away," whispered he; "this is too much."

"Too much!—too much!" cried Dominic. "Do I not stand, unworthy as I am, in the presence of my God, my Saviour, my Father? O ye glorious cathedrals, in which I have thought I was worshipping the Most High, what is your glory to the glory of this? O ye ministering priests, who have chanted with organ tones the praises of God, what are your voices, what your incense, to the voices which speak here to my inmost spirit, to the incense which ascends from burning hearts kindled by Thy love, O Father? And the Real, the very Real Presence; yes, O Saviour! Thou art here in our midst!—Thou!—Thou! And I—what am I that this glory is shown to me? 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in Thy sight, and am not worthy to be called Thy son.' No, no, it is too, too glorious! See! the heavens declare the glory of God—God in His holy temple—

and I crawl upon earth. Yet Thou carest for me, or Thou hadst not spared me, and shown me such things as these. God be merciful to me a sinner!"

Dominic seemed unconscious of all but the heavens above him in noontide glory, and of the spirit-voice from the heavens declaring the glory of God. He forgot himself and all those with him; he felt God's presence, and spoke before Him, pouring out the fulness of his heart.

The others were much struck. Howard nearly fainted; his terror was intense. He cried out, "Take care, or God Almighty will appear and destroy us all! Lord, have mercy! Stop him! stop him! or he will bring a judgment upon us all!"

His voice did stop Dominic; he was silent, but gazed up into the bright expanse above him in silence.

All were silent.

Howard trembled violently, and again was the first to speak:

"Come, oh come, Wilkinson! Let us leave these people and this place. God knows what may come down upon us. See how he gazes up! he sees some-

thing! Come!" and he hurried away without daring to look behind him.

The others stood silent beside Dominic for some minutes. Their lips spoke not; perhaps their minds, their hearts spoke not, for they were more occupied in the inward hearing of the voice which spoke there in each spirit in that little church.

Soon Dominic came to himself as out of a reverie. He took Brown and Graham by the hands, and said, "Surely God is in this place, and I knew it not; I do now understand that you came *to church here*."

They all returned together; not a word more was spoken till they came to a bench at the foot of the hill, where they found Howard still trembling. Wilkinson offered his arm, which he took, saying, "Let them get on before us. Don't keep near those terrible people, for God's sake!"

Wilkinson indulged him; and having asked Brown where he was lodged, took Howard under his care, which indeed he needed, and Rookhurst went without hesitation with his new friends.

"Did you not promise," said he to Brown, "to tell me of your doubtings and questionings, and how



these and your appeal to the Bible brought you under the Ban?"

"If you will accompany us to our hotel, I will do as you wish, and my friend Mr. Graham will, I trust, also tell us his trials of the same sort; it may be a fit conclusion to a Sunday begun as we have commenced it together."

When Wilkinson took Howard to their hotel, and revived him with a glass of wine and some food, the sense of terror began to subside. At last he said, "Wilkinson, I am ashamed of myself. I made a sad fool of myself before those people; but there was something terribly grand in it all; and up there, where we went instead of going to church, it was so curious we should meet such strange people, and that men under the Ban of their churches should have such ideas. It frightened me, I confess. I did not know which to expect, God in His glory to appear, or Satan in his darkness; I was as much afraid of one as of the other, and even now I feel half inclined to think I ought not to have been there. Still it was grand: that glorious sky over us like a vaulted roof, that expanse of land and sea, mountain and

valley, city and country,—I confess it was a glorious temple, ten thousand thousand times more fitting for the worship of Almighty God than all the temples men ever raised, fine though they be. Then the words that older man spoke. They seemed to me to approach the blasphemous,—very unlike any I ever heard from our clergy,—about men being kings and priests if they were Christians. Yet it was, I fancy, very like what I have heard in the portions of the Bible appointed to be read on certain days. Did it not strike you so?”

“Yes,” replied Wilkinson, “the whole thing struck me as it did you, only not near so violently; but the abiding impression on my mind is that it was grand; that a great truth shone throughout the very curious occurrence, and that I long to know more about it and about those men.”

“I am quite of a different way of thinking. Much there was fine, impressive, perhaps true, but that I doubt; yet to my view the terrible was the prevalent complexion of the whole thing, and I hope to see no more of it, and the less of them the better.”

As they talked Rookhurst joined them. He apologized for leaving them, saying he wished to know

where their new casual acquaintances lived ; that he had come to the hotel to dine with his companions, and after dinner had promised to take an evening stroll with those he had left.

The conversation took a general turn till dinner-time. Wilkinson, who had great conversational power, entertained them with many anecdotes, chiefly about the adventures he had met with on a continental tour with Brown and some others before Brown's marriage. He described Brown as such a capital fellow, as merry and active as he was good and steady, that both his companions were led to wish to know more of him ; and Howard was so far weaned from his terror, that when Rookhurst put on his hat to join the other party, saying he was promised a detail of the circumstances which had led to Brown and Graham being both under the Ban, and Wilkinson said, " Well, Howard, you and I will take our walk our own way," he replied :

" Now I think it would look odd if we were to let Rookhurst go alone. I have a great fancy to go too, if you don't object."

" Not at all, my dear fellow," said Wilkinson ; " on

the contrary, I have more than curiosity to hear what they have to say about themselves."

So the three went together.

That evening Brown related the story of his doubts and questionings much as we have heard them; Graham next day gave them the account of his. They all were much interested, and often interrupted the course of the history with remarks, questions, or suggestions of passages which were more or less to the purpose.

Dominic remarked that his doubts and questionings were perhaps more curious than theirs, because he had been brought up under a system which avowedly discouraged inquiry, and enforced implicit subjection to the clergy. He was immediately pressed to give the history of his difficulties; and it was agreed on all hands that he was right in saying his was the most remarkable case of all.

Wilkinson soon observed: "How is it that so few people are harassed by such doubts, and perplexed by such questionings?"

"I was just thinking, with wonder, of the very same thing," cried Howard. "I never doubted,

that I am aware of, till now, and now I am all doubt, as if I had been smitten with a doubting malady by contagion with doubters. I have no doubt many would just say so, and attribute the change to evil company; but I must say that no influence has been used, no arguments brought against me; it is only plain and clear facts that weigh with me, and outweigh all the authorities and powers which have been the lawgivers of my religion. I will have no more to do with them—I renounce them; it is all chicanery and deception. I was a miserable slave to them—henceforth I am free!”

Wilkinson was amazed at this sudden and violent change in his friend's way of thinking: he who had been so docile. He had not, indeed, ever been remarkable for a very steady moral life; nor did he seem hitherto to have cared much for either morality or religion for themselves; but he quietly went through the routine prescribed for him, evidently thinking it often a bore, but an inevitable one, and not to be kicked against.

He now flew to the other extreme. However, after

much friendly and serious discussion, they all met on Arthur's Seat on Sunday by agreement.

As Wilkinson, Rookhurst, and Howard were walking towards their place of congregating, Howard observed that he did not see the meaning of people assembling on Sundays, or being bound by any rules or regulations in religion. "It seems to me," said he, "like what Rookhurst so well described, as illustrated by his brother comparing it with the salaams and prostrations required by the tyrant Eastern emperors from those who approached their footstool. I don't believe that the Almighty requires any forms or degrading prostrations of spirit before Him by His people."

"I can't help agreeing with you in the theory," replied Wilkinson, "yet I have a feeling in me that we are wrong. I do not see through it, and cannot pretend to meet your objections logically. What do you think of it, Rookhurst?"

"I would not give up having something like Church and daily private prayer on any account. It would be to me like renouncing my God."

"Ah!" said Howard, "I see you are a slave of habit, even when you have seen light enough to

refuse to be a slave to spiritual domination by any man."

Rookhurst coloured, and said, "You wrong me ; it is not a slavery. I am conscious it is not. Yet I admit that habits have great influence, and I may be influenced by my old customs. I cannot, however, any more than Wilkinson, give a logical answer to your question. But here are our friends ; perhaps we may get an answer from them."

Graham, much the oldest, and one accustomed to the pastoral care of a congregation, was, no one knew exactly how, put in the position of a leader. He proposed that they should remove a little from the public paths, and on a small grassy flat at the foot of a great rock they read together in their Bibles. They sought God's teaching influence ; they praised Him for His goodness ; and spoke of Jesus as if He were visible in the midst.

Graham, as if the question had been put to him by Howard, said :—

"What is the use of this? Why is it that we, who are driven from the communion of the religious societies of which we were members, cling to the

privilege of congregating for worship of the Most High? I will tell you my ideas, and shall be glad to hear each of yours.

“First, properly speaking, neither in Jerusalem’s temple, nor in any other set place, is it appointed, nor can it be, that the especial worship of the Father is to be celebrated.

“Secondly, Those who worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth, not confined to this set place or in the other.

“Thirdly, As the true and spiritual worship of the Father is not confined to any place or places, so neither is it limited to any rituals, forms, or utterances.

“The true spirit-worship of God’s children springs from a loving sense of His mercies; and consists in such a life that, whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, we do all to the glory of God the Father—doing all in the name or character of His Son; as sons beloved by Him, sons trying to please Him.

“So the apostle calls us—beseeching us by the mercies of God—to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable

worship. Does that, my friends, so far meet your views?"

"Mine precisely," cried Howard. "But you exactly agree with my idea that all forms, rites, meetings, are needless. We have only to live and act so as to please God, and all is right."

"For modes of faith let graceless bigots fight,
He can't be wrong whose life is in the right,"

rejoined Smith.


"Yes," added Graham, "you are both right in a certain degree. As if a soldier were to say, It is not the drill which is the aim of a soldier, but to handle his arms well, and obey quickly the word of command, and so to fight well in the battle; it is not the sharpening of tools that is a carpenter's glory, but making well-executed, properly finished work. Is therefore drill nothing to the soldier? or the time spent at the grindstone lost to the carpenter? If you see a regiment fulfil its duty steadily and successfully in the campaign; if you see the woodwork of a house neatly jointed and properly finished; if you see a man *whose life is in the right*—by their

works ye know them. But the drill, the sharpening, and what is equivalent in the spirit-life of man, has obviously not been neglected."

"I perceive your meaning," said Wilkinson, "and I must say it explains what I felt: that without some regular drill, some set times of sharpening, we shall be sure to be found bad soldiers and inefficient workmen in the campaign of life, in the work of every day."

"I know," added Smith, "that after the drill and the grinding of the last two Sundays, I, at least, wished and strove to be better more than I ever did before. There was something in the whetstone that was then applied which touched the hard steel. But I feel it would get blunt again, and make the work both rough and hard too, unless the edge were constantly renewed."

With much more conversation in a similar strain, they passed the mid-day hours. Then mounting the highest pinnacle of the rock, they looked round upon the panorama which presented itself on every side. There every heart among them, but one, felt a joy which made it praise the Lord, the Maker of those



beauteous works of His hands; and looking down at the city under their feet, felt a pang which made it pray for erring men who go so near to make a hell of God's beautiful world.

The one exception was Howard. His countenance showed plainly that he was not in unison with those among whom he found himself.

Walking with Wilkinson to their hotel, he said:

"I don't like this work at all. I take it for heresy, or blasphemy, or something very bad and irregular. I am sure the Church does not allow of these doings. In fact, I am altogether disappointed."

"Why disappointed? What did you expect that has failed?"

"Failed! Yes, you may say '*failed*.' You know what a bore it is to have to do all that the Church requires. I am sure I did always as little as ever I could, and often got into scrapes with the clergy for doing so little; yet it was always a bore, a burden, a chain, a bother. Well! these people seemed to hold out a hope of getting free from all this; and I was full of the bright idea of being no more under such tyrannical control, and of being

loose from masses and confessions, and matins ~~and~~ vespers, and all. But here comes in that fellow, worse than all the clergy in Christendom—if he was an apostle, if he was the Almighty, he couldn't be worse—and tells us about ~~drill~~ and sharpening tools being a second-rate ~~affair~~, and that it is only to prepare us to ~~fight~~ all our lives, and work all our days. ~~That's~~ a look-out for a fellow! Is it not?"

"But did not what Mr. Graham said seem all true?"

"Ah! that's the worst of it. I'd a hundred times rather be under the old yoke, that I hated bad enough; but you see there was nice room for doubting. There was nothing in the thing itself, nothing but the authority of Mother Church to keep you in awe and in order, and one could not help hoping things might not be as bad for us as those priests said. It was a black look-out they gave us, but there might be a better light in the background. But that fellow, he did not claim any authority—not one bit—but it was THE THINGS; they came in their own power. Grinding tools indeed! Drilling recruits forsooth! The things he said ground me to powder, and made me feel very like the awkward squad, I can tell you.

I do not think I shall ever get over it. Every day! All one's life! It's too bad, by Jove it is! Don't you think so?"

Rookhurst had listened to all this with amazement. He said to Howard, "I don't think you could have understood Mr. Graham right."

"Not understand right! I hope so. But no, that won't do. I have every word as clear as that church-bell now ringing in my ears—ding-dong, ding-dong. Drill now and then; grinding tools for awhile, that you may fight all your life, and labour all your days. ~~Not understand that! Does the galley-slave~~ understand when he is sentenced for life, and has his fetters riveted? I do understand—and I would to God I didn't, that's all. I would drill Sundays and holy-days, and grind half an hour a day, and bear it like a man; but all, all one's life, no pleasure, no play. Bah! I'll not think of it. Come to dinner, boys, come."

Howard's commentary had a great effect upon both his companions. His mistake made all clearer to them, each according to his temperament and education and habits of thought and feeling. There was

much difference, but they agreed in the main. They saw and felt that if the religion which required the whole life, made it a burden, it was not the religion of the God who cares for His offspring. That true religion does in fact not require, as a penal sacrifice, the dedication of the whole life, and of every power, but shows how the whole life and every power may be spent and employed *satisfactorily*; and that in proportion as a man attains to that, so in proportion does he please the Father who loves him, and the Sovereign whose glory is in the prosperity of His people, and the Saviour whose will is goodwill towards men.

They talked of this; but though they understood each other, Howard was plainly under the thralldom of an idea that gave a gloom to the whole truth, and it was in vain to argue with him.

When they next met their friends, Howard was not with them; he avoided the meeting. Wilkinson mentioned to Graham how Howard had understood, yet misunderstood, his words.

Graham turned to the hundred and nineteenth psalm, and pointed to the verses, "So shall I keep

thy law *continually for ever and ever*, and I will walk *at liberty*." "Is not that your friend's difficulty, to reconcile these two? The rest of the sentence explains it, 'For to do, to be enabled to do, what one seeks, is liberty' (provided always that what one seeks is not a step in slavery); so the psalm goes on, and not only asserts that the two ideas agree, but gives the reason, '*For I seek thy precepts.*'"

"Happy they who can say that," said Rookhurst.

"Yes," rejoined Brown, "as He teaches who said, 'Blessed are they who do *hunger* and *thirst* after righteousness, for they shall be filled.'"

"I see now," said Smith; "I see the religion you would maintain is the religion that makes people be good."

"Yes," said Rookhurst, "leave off doing evil, and try to do good."

"Ah," replied Smith, "*try*, that is the word that upsets me—trying and failing—trying and failing."

Graham pointed out to him that in everything human, perfection is progressive.

"But," said he, "if I could hope to succeed at last, then I could hail each little advance with joy, and

even not be so *despairing* at the experience of many failures."

"Does not the assurance contained in the verse we have mentioned commend itself to your mind and heart, that they who have a hungering after goodness shall not be disappointed?" replied Graham.

"I think," said Brown, "a cloud is being dissipated that mystified religion to me more or less. Does not Scripture speak as if *to be good* was the end of all true religion?"

"To get out of the ways of error, which, pretending to lead to joy, go to destruction and misery; and to go on in the ways of truth, which do not disappoint, but lead to the joy of the Lord—there is the end and object of true religion," said Graham.

"But is not faith in the Saviour essential?" asked Brown.

"As essential as the mainspring is to the watch."

"I take up your simile, and add, and as essential as the pendulum to the clock too."

"Right, you do take me up indeed; for faith in the anointed Son of God gives both the motive force and the regulating power too."

"I think I perceive your meaning," said Rookhurst, who had listened with intense attention. "And both motive and directing power have a purpose; the end of the one is to make the watch *go*, and of the other to make it *go right*."

"Yes," added Graham; "so faith in the Saviour stirs up a new life in the believer, who begins to love God when he sees that God first loved him,—that great truth to which Jesus witnesses in His coming, life, death, resurrection, and all His teaching. And when that life is quickened in him, the believer has in Jesus an example how he should walk and please God—how he should live so as to have the divine joy fulfilled in himself."

"Your religion would become a very small affair if you took it up that way; for both the beginning and the end of it are so closely connected, so little (shall I call it?) *machinery* between the motive power and the desired end;" so spoke Smith, for the first time taking part in this conversation.

"Just what I was going to say," rejoined Dominic. "I should sadly miss all the machinery to which I have been accustomed. I don't like the common-

place word *machinery*. How shall I express it?—all the requisite details, the rites, the ceremonies, the doctrines, and dogmas; all that the Church says is so necessary to religion.”

Graham assured them that he had felt exactly what Rookhurst expressed; although the denomination of Christians to which he belonged prided itself upon having pruned off and cut away all that was superfluous, all that they considered as disfiguring, or distorting, or giving a false and tinsel glitter to other churches. But he said that the Presbyterians were as much attached to their apparently simple forms and symbols as the Roman Catholics to their intricate or brilliant theology and ceremonial.

“I have found,” said he, “that the true religion is like a diamond of small bulk compared to other things, but of surpassing brilliancy and inestimable value. But men set the precious gem in various frameworks, which, if simple and well-adapted, may render it more easily handled, more conveniently worn. And according to their fashioning of this framework in various patterns, they form themselves into societies. One, thinking to give it a setting worthy of the

diamond, sets it half hidden in a mass of elaborately wrought gold. Another surrounds it with lesser gems set in the gold around it. A third thinks all this mass of gold hides the lustre, and will have no setting at all, or a plain circle of unornamented metal. A fourth perceives that the gems of lesser note distract the eye from the great central diamond, and diminish its effect. Then they dispute, quarrel, fight about their peculiar frameworks, and the diamond is forgotten or put aside, more or less, as its professed admirers revile each other's framework."

"You are a capital hand at a parable," said Smith, "if that sort of an illustration is properly so called; I see things clearer when thus brought before me. But sermons I never can abide; they puzzle me, and generally leave the impression that the preacher, if he is a good one, has come in his own mind to some evident conclusion which he dares not bring plainly and fully out."

When they separated, Dominic had many perplexing thoughts (*doubts and questionings* he called them) running through his mind. As he had said, he liked

the ceremonial he had been used to; he had a certain veneration for the authoritative decrees of councils, and theology of priests, and formulas of books of devotion.

Why did Graham condemn all these? Then arose the counter-question, But did he condemn all these? No, he only condemned people for fighting about them, or rather he suggested that it was foolish and wrong to fight about them.

His idea of the diamond was a bright one. But what authority had he to bring up the truth which he asserted to be illustrated by his diamond? Again a counter-question: Did he claim any authority? Does truth require any authority for its assertion? If TRUTH be posted up, printed upon the village pump, is it not TRUE; and if true, to be received as true in its own power, not on the authority which holds it up!

Dominic was beset with these thoughts till he went to bed; even then they kept him long awake. And when he fell asleep he was in a glorious temple, with a wondrous vaulted roof, upon which he gazed, unable to discern what it was composed of, puzzled

to conceive how it was suspended there, fearful lest it should fall upon him, yet filled with wonder at its beauty.

Bright spots appeared among the groined arches. Their sculptured forms became less and less distinct; like a mist they dissolved away, and the bright spots were stars in the midnight sky. A voice seemed to say, This is the Temple of God. His vision then took various fantastic turns, which he could not recall when he wakened, but the vision of the temple remained clear.

Was it a mere common dream? He could not tell; but it suggested many a thought, raised many a feeling which stirred the dreamer to waking thought and action.

In the morning, at breakfast, Howard said, "Dull work this, my friends; we have seen all the lions of *Auld Reekie*, and had interviews with that big beast of a lion over there" (alluding to the resemblance of Arthur's Seat), "enough to sicken one of the sight of him. I vote we go on and complete our tour, and waste no more time here. We have only a month, and a fortnight is lost already."

It was true enough. Time waits for no man. Wilkinson had been interested, and Rookhurst partly delighted, partly affrighted, by the religious adventure they had had, but both were rather desirous of a change. It was with them as when one has eaten a full meal; however good, one inclines to anything else rather than more of the same.

CHAPTER VI.

ANTIPODES.

AFTER the evening which Brown had spent at the Dean's there were sundry discussions going forward, among those who had been present there, upon the subjects of that night's debate and the conversation of the following morning. The Dean was not a little annoyed at Mr. Thompson's rather violent, uncivil manner, which he said was incomprehensible, in so urbane a person as Mr. Thompson generally showed himself. His wife was peculiarly indignant, and insisted that her husband should call him to account for his behaviour, which the Dean was much inclined to do, feeling convinced there was some cause beyond what he was aware of to provoke such violence of manner. But he had no idea of such a calling to account as would express any anger on his part, but merely such as might give Mr. Thompson an opportunity of accounting for himself.

He invited nearly the same party as had assembled to meet Brown, hoping that the matters then debated would be alluded to, and that so he might have an opportunity of drawing out an explanation from his friend.

He was not disappointed. Every soul who had been there had found the discussion so exciting that it had, in one direction or another, set their minds fermenting. Some had followed up the questions then discussed; some had attacked, some defended Mr. Thompson; some had vehemently condemned all discussion on sacred subjects; some had maintained the right of free inquiry, and affirmed that a party, meeting at a clergyman's house, were the very people to give these matters an airing.

Hence it came to pass that early in the evening Messrs. Brown and Thompson were the subjects of conversation.

An admirer of Mr. Thompson's plan of concluding the campaign on the former occasion expressed her delight at the effectual onslaught made upon the delinquent Brown by that gentleman.

It was a lady who did so; and in spite of a due

deference to the sex, Mr. Thompson felt obliged to overthrow the position which she had taken up upon his success.

"Never," said he, "did a man more utterly fail in his purpose or in his duty than I did that time."

"Ah! eh! ho!" and other such ejaculations burst from all quarters of the room.

"How was that?" asked the lady. "I can't understand such self-depreciation."

All were excited to hear the explanation of Mr. Thompson.

But he replied—"It is merely the simple fact that I have told you, madam, and I cannot hesitate to repeat what I have said before all these who were present then, and a few more whom I see now, and who were not then here."

He resisted all attempts to draw out a fuller explanation then.

The conversation took a turn towards the subjects of the former discussion. Several declared that they had searched in their Bibles diligently, and had repeatedly imagined they had found a text or a passage which plainly declared the desired orthodoxy; but on trying

to follow Mr. Brown's plan (that is, *to write down the question, and then write down in full the passage in the Bible, and to see if the latter really contained and gave the answer to the former*), they saw it did not, at least *not the answer they wanted*. Several agreed in this.

"But," said the Curate, "did any of these texts, when so written down, give any *other* answer to the question?"

"Yes."

Mr. Thompson emphatically answered, "Yes."

"Mr. Thompson!!" uttered by more than one voice.

"If you, my friends," continued he, "have honestly asked the questions to which Mr. Brown referred, and turned over your Bibles till you have found passages which *directly* answer them, you cannot doubt that the Bible does answer: *First*, As to the purpose mainly intended and produced by the great act of the Gospel history; *Secondly*, As to which of two parties was at enmity with the other, and which of the two is represented as being reconciled; and *Thirdly* (though I admit it requires a larger research, and is less proved by individual texts), What is the *ultimate* purpose of God as regards mankind?"

The ladies seemed to have resolved to be in the van this evening, or else a spirit of inquiry had taken hold of them, and urged them on, regardless of consequences, to drive the men into a corner, and to compel distinct answers, however reluctant those might be who had to give them.

A lady cried, "O Mr. Thompson, do you remember what you said of Mr. Brown the evening he was here?"

"Indeed, madam, I do; and however my temper may have been to blame for the manner, I cannot shrink from the entire force of the matter."

"Why, it was absolutely pronouncing his excommunication; and, if I understood right, for holding the very positions which you defend to-night."

"I cannot help that, madam; but I beg to set you right on one point. I do not take upon myself to defend those positions. If they are true, they will ~~be~~ quite able to defend themselves in an engagement with all who will fight the battle fairly, and they will substantiate themselves in the minds of those who take the trouble to seek the truth. But I am quite aware that many who cry out about truth, do not think the truth worth the trouble of real inquiry,

and accept as true whatever has first been presented to them as such. While these persons continue in that state of mind, I confess they are unassailable. They have retired like soldiers shunning the campaign, and behind the bulwarks of stolid, self-complacent apathy feel safe from all that might convince them either that they are really right or really wrong."

"But how," said another lady, "can you declare a person excommunicated for holding what you believe to be true?"

"I do not declare it. I merely read part of the canons ecclesiastical, and they declare excommunicate, by the very fact of contradicting, every one who shall affirm that anything in the Book of Common Prayer is contrary to Scripture."

"But you, Mr. Thompson," rejoined the first lady, "which do *you* hold by—the Bible or the Prayer-Book?"

"I should like to hold with both; and I do hold with the Prayer-Book as far as it is quite consistent with the Bible."

"But what as to the places which are not consistent with the Bible? Are you, too, not excommunicate for

holding with the Bible where it does not agree with the Prayer-Book?"

"I should be so, by the canon before cited, if I maintained that this was so."

"And have you not maintained it?"

"Not that I am aware. I have said that there are passages in the Bible which will give direct answers to those inquirers who seek an answer there; but I take up the cudgels for neither side—let them each defend themselves if they can."

"But assuredly, Mr. Thompson, you cannot say that your own opinion does not go with one side or the other?"

"And pray, madam, have I said any such thing?"

"Mr. Thompson," said the Dean, very seriously, "you cannot be playing with us on so important a matter—I am sure you cannot."

"Indeed I am not; I could not," replied he.

"Well then," continued the Dean, "I must say I am not a little puzzled by the line you have taken. Why did you in, I must say, a rather violent manner oppose and declare excommunicate the person who

supported these doctrines not very long ago, and to-day you say the Bible supports them?"

"Your question is direct, and I admit you have a right, Mr. Dean, so to put it. I will as directly answer. I opposed Mr. Brown because I believed him to be wrong; I did so violently, because when I could not *prove* him wrong I lost my temper; and I declared the excommunication according to the canons and constitutions ecclesiastical still in force, because I was and am persuaded that nothing else will quell the spirit of questioning which those who doubt are led to indulge in."

"But, Mr. Thompson," said the Rector, "do you think such means can lead to a hearty consent to the teaching of the Prayer-Book in the case of those who so seriously doubt as to inquire, and who so really desire instruction as to require a specific answer?"

"That, Mr. Rector, is a question as to my private opinion, on which I must decline to assert that I have fully made up my mind. I leave it a question for the opinion of any and all present to determine each for himself."

The Curate here interposed for the first time, saying :

“ Allow me to ask Mr. Thompson if he does not feel that the excommunication which he showed as falling upon Mr. Brown here, does also fall upon himself?”

“ My feelings I must reserve to myself; they are foreign to the important subjects which have been brought before us. But let me say, if Mr. Close, my questioner on this personal matter, will accompany me home in my carriage, I will discuss even this personal matter with him.”

The company broke up into little knots of two or three, and spent the rest of the evening in discussing—some the questions, some the persons, as their peculiar temperaments led them.

Mr. Close, the curate, accompanied Mr. Thompson, whose way passed his door.

They were both conscientious men, deeply interested in ascertaining the truth, and deeply attached to the Church of England. All that Mr. Close could be induced to answer when asked about their *tête-à-tête* in the carriage was, that they thoroughly agreed.

The conversation which took place between Mr. Thompson and the Curate shall be related in a chapter at the end. They were both sincere men, whose

views had been, as they thought, clear, but who did not shrink from testing them.

One result has been, that not long after the carriage conversation, Mr. Close informed his rector that he should leave him. They parted with mutual regret, and Mr. Close vanished from the scene.

Mr. Thompson, without assigning any reason, resigned his living into the hands of the Bishop. He also disappeared.

Another movement among our acquaintances was the departure of Wilkinson to Australia, where two of his brothers were already prosperous emigrants. He kept up his correspondence with Brown, and about a year after his arrival in Australia he wrote the following letter :—

“ MY DEAR BROWN,

“ I lately told you all our personal news ; I now write about a matter which I am sure will interest you, for I vividly remember our Church on Arthur's Seat ; and the things talked of then and there have been brought curiously to my mind by an adventure here.

“ My two brothers hold a run for sheep, which is not more than sufficient for the employment of their own much-improved capital. They say a large run is much more profitable than a smaller, and advised me to join with some respectable emigrant who might have about as much capital as myself. I advertised, and among those who answered was one who particularly took my fancy ; he is a staid, not quite elderly gentleman, not a bit the cut of an emigrant, and he admits that he knows nothing of sheep farming ; but he wishes to invest four thousand pounds in sheep, and is as well persuaded as I am that by joining we shall have a better prospect of success. We have made our arrangements under the advice of my brothers, who consider our run and our stock well chosen, and the six months we have been at it I like well, especially as I have very pleasant company, for my partner, though somewhat *short* in his temper, is a capital fellow ; and a friend, to whom he is so attached that he would have him for an assistant in our work, is better still. He promised to be worth his keep ; but he is worth a good salary, and good keep, and thanks after all. I never saw such a fellow ; he seems all

conscience, and is as active as possible; so quick too at taking up a new business that he knows more about sheep already than any of our regular shepherds. He has suggested several things which have been most useful in our speculations, and at building a shanty he is first-rate. They are both well educated, and decidedly gentlemen.

"So much for our *work* and its success; but you will be at least as much interested in our *rest*.

"We three and a Scotch shepherd positively form a little church here on Sundays; but it is not a mere Sunday church. Both our partners are marvellously skilled in the knowledge of the Bible, and of all that the Bible teaches; I should think they were parsons, only they are in other respects so unclerical. I was all for submitting to their manifestly superior knowledge, and admitting as true what they asserted, but they would have none of this. When I said, I thoroughly believe you when you tell me these excellent things, one of them replies, 'To believe *me* is all very well, but I want you to believe *the thing itself*, not merely him who tells it, however truthfully he

may speak. The Saviour who came into the world to bear witness to the truth was not satisfied that His disciples should merely believe Him, but required that they should *know the truth* itself. He *uncovered* hidden things, *and did not merely tell us what is under the cover*. But men are apt to cover up again what He has uncovered, by using a word which fails to express the true meaning, and by saying, "*God has revealed*;" they keep up a mystery, when the true and right word, "*God has uncovered it*," would express that that which caused it to be a mystery was taken away in order that we might see it, and not merely admit the fact, even on the highest authority.' And when I have replied, that surely much is still mysterious to us in God's ways and word, they have replied to the purpose that it is not for want of God's uncovering the hidden things, but for want of our thankfully and diligently using the senses God has given to discern the things He has *uncovered*, or '*revealed*,' as it is usually expressed.

"The result of our Sunday's assembly of four has been, that while I acknowledge and feel my inferiority, still I am one with them, and so is Sandy Gordon,

our shepherd; and our research in Scripture is like our study of an excellent work I have got on Australian sheep-runs and sheep-farming. We study both, because we want to be better men and better sheep-farmers; and as we try to put in practice the things we learn in the book on sheep, and to get into the habit of the right routine, so we do with the Bible also. I find it quite a different book from what I had any idea of.

“My brothers took a race down here to see us last week; they stayed over Sunday, and were much struck with our little Church, and begged Thompson or Close to visit them, and set something of the kind going among their families. I don't know how their wives would like it—John's Anne is *very* gay; but I hope one of them will go. I cannot conceive any people being really happy, and able to look up and to look forward, unless they have the clear simple idea of the good God, which the Bible gives when people will let the Bible answer for itself, instead of setting up to defend the *Bible* (which means *our opinions*). ‘*Thy faithfulness and truth shall have the defence of our shield and buckler,*’ seems to be their reading of the text.

I could go on for a long time on this theme. I hope it does not sound like *cant* to you, for never was there as *cant* than in my friends Thompson and Close."

The rest of the letter was on family affections and so forth.

Another letter, some months later, to the Dean gives farther insight into the life of our friends.

"MY DEAR DEAN,

"You, almost alone of my friends, knew the *why* and the *what* of my disappearance; and I have been much supported, especially at first, by your approbation of my resigning my living, and throwing myself out of gear, as it were, with the Established Church, although you did not agree with the opinions and views of Bible and Prayer-Book which led me to do so.

"You know, by your own experience, how great must have been the difficulty, and how severe the pang, when I resigned the profession of an appointed minister of the Church of England.

"You may conceive how earnestly I prayed for guidance, and for a blessing on the path which I saw

conscientiously led me away from my connexion with you all as a clergyman. I prayed earnestly that I might see a token for good; and you, my dear friend, will, I know, rejoice that I have a token for good such as I might indeed desire but could not have expected here.

"You know already that Close and I became sheep-farmers here. I happily had some capital; he has youth, activity, a capital head, and a willing heart. We fell in with a very desirable partner, a Mr. Wilkinson, with whom we live.

"I little thought, taking up the office of a shepherd, that I was going into the position to be a shepherd under the Chief whose flock is man, and whose office here is to seek and to save the lost of His flock. Yet so it has been. Without clerical profession, without *Reverend* to my name or bands to my neck, I have had a field, a portion of the wilderness, to work in, given to me, as it were, by Divine gift as my '*run*,' as we say here.

"First, my very dear friend, as I may now call him, Wilkinson, my partner: he was one of those who, as he himself says, profess to admire God's characte

and to love God, for fear it might be the worse for him if he did not. He was neither religious nor irreligious, fairly moral as men go, a gentleman in the approved idea of such, and therefore never scoffed; but he told me fairly that if a clergyman had proposed to him the freedom of inquiry into Scripture and investigation of Christianity, he would have doubted the sincerity, and turned his back upon the proposal. I have, indeed, brought him to see how wrong he would have been, but have given him no idea that I had been a clergyman, nor does he in the least suspect either of us to have been so.

“By degrees, but by no means slow degrees, Wilkinson became a diligent and delighted student of Scripture. He quickly, with a few stumblings no doubt, found the inestimable blessing of the knowledge of God in Christ reconciling the world to Himself; and he soon saw the real blessing culminating in the turning each of us from his iniquities. I wish you could both hear and see this young man; so diligent in his business, so full of youthful sport and fun, so friendly and companionable, and with the vein of true Christianity running through all: Jesus-like

love to the Father and to His offspring ; Jesus-like appreciation of all that is good, beautiful, and enjoyable, and detestation of all that is bad, false, destructive of man's happiness, and displeasing to God. Catching himself often just near sinning, sometimes in sin, but willing to acknowledge his fault, and seek with renewed effort and prayer to be more continually victorious.

" His brothers, also sheep-farmers, came some months ago to visit us, whose hearts the Lord opened, that they too gave heed to the things taught in the Bible.

" They had most thoroughly wrong ideas of Christianity, especially as concerned the liberty of Christians. Outspoken men as they are, they said at once, when we proposed to them to join us on Sunday, not only in resting, but in those exercises in which we had been accustomed to pass much of the day :

" " Oh yes ; if that's your way we won't break through your rules, though we don't pretend to be religious."

" However, they went farther than they intended, and expressed their astonishment when they found how long a time we had spent reading and talking of God and of Jesus the Anointed, whom He had sent. ' Why,' cried one, ' I don't feel at all afraid of the

God you speak of ; no, not if He came with a sword in each hand upon me. I am a father myself, and nothing vexes me so much as that my son should be afraid of me, either because he has done wrong, or because I am angry, though I confess *my* temper may give the children an excuse at times. And again, Jesus, how different the Bible makes Him from what I have gathered, from what I have usually read and heard. People make Him out as so essentially different from us. I have always felt how absurd is the idea of our having an example set us which we are to follow, while He who is our example is essentially different from us. But the tendency of all we have read in the Bible together, looking at it as it speaks, undistorted by any comments, is to make us see that our origin, our pleasure and pain, our destination, are the same as His ; that the same spirit which made the man Jesus, the Anointed, is promised and given to us, so that essentially we are like Him, though practically, or, as one may say, functionally, we so sadly differ from Him. Still the essentials of which we also partake, while they bring us under all the responsibility which makes us blameworthy when we

misuse or neglect our privileges or powers given by our Father, also bring to us the living hope, that we may have *His* joy fulfilled in ourselves when *His* teaching is accepted and followed by us.'

" 'I should like,' said the other brother, 'to see Mr. Thompson or Mr. Close with my wife, who hates religion because it makes life dull before its time. Dull! Why here in this shanty, without anything to make us cheery but merry hearts within us, I protest that while the things the Bible has taught us have hardly ever been out of our minds we have lived a most joyous week. My one drawback has been that our wives and families were not with us.'

"But to make matters short; I went by invitation to visit the two brothers. They live in a more settled part of the country; their houses are close together, and a good many neighbours live near them. They have been several years here, and have prospered.

"I spent a month with them, and such a month might make one who had devoted his life to the ministry ready to die in the feeling of having, by God's blessing, done some good in His ministry.

"I left them loving their Bibles as that which had

uncovered the hidden truth; loving their God as a Father whose love they could not doubt; loving Jesus as the Saviour who came to bring them to their God and Father; loving righteousness as the right way to divine joy; loving each other as brethren; and last of all, loving me as the agent by whose means all this love had been brought out in their hearts.

“Need I say how I love them, or how I feel towards our Father in heaven, who has so guided and blessed me?

“You will ask, How will all this go on without regular Church order and ordained clergymen?

“I answer, I cannot tell; but I am sure it will be marred if a system springs up which surrounds itself with *manifold* articles and rituals, forms and dogmas, agreement in which is insisted upon on penalty of exclusion from brotherly communion.

“Thankfulness to God our Father, who sent His Son to bless us by turning every one from his iniquities, and when we were enemies to bring us to love our Father, and a sincere endeavour to live godly, after the example of our Saviour, and so be fitted for a happy unending life, should be the extreme limits

of the terms of communion in a Church such as our four in the shanty, or the Church universal.

"To that Church universal (consisting of all who are above designated, and maybe of more still, however any of them may be branded as heterodox or heretic) I belong, for I *am* one of them,—ay, and one with you and many a one who denies me as a brother, because I am what I am, *under the Ban*,

"Yet yours sincerely in Christian fellowship,

"JOHN THOMPSON."

CHAPTER VII.

"HIM THAT IS WEAK IN THE FAITH RECEIVE YE; BUT
NOT TO DOUBTFUL DISPUTATIONS."

BROWN continued to keep up his intercourse and correspondence with a large circle of friends, many of whom agreed with him in the idea which it became the chief end of his existence to spread—that the Christian Church universal does consist of those who have the first rudiments of Christianity, and that the main cause of the little progress of vital Christianity is to be found in the tendency of every Church to limit the number of those to be accounted *in the Church*, to those who profess to hold a number of doctrines about God, Jesus, and righteousness, which, whether all true or not, ought not to be held as necessary to Christian brotherhood.

He found, however, few who would stand by him in insisting upon real action upon those principles,

and many good men seemed more unwilling than unable to understand his object.

There were many questions upon which one or another of the *banned ones* differed from the various religious denominations to which they had belonged, and for these differences of view had been put *under the Ban*.

The question which rose in the mind of Brown, and of others with whom he found himself associated, was not whether these were all right, or any of them right; but whether, supposing them to be in error on these points, they ought to be excluded from Christian communion, or could be shut out of the number of real Christians, while they maintained that "JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD," and endeavoured to live in the fear of God, and to work righteousness.

Hence also arose the other question: whether it was not an unchristian thing to pretend to exclude such persons from the congregation of Christians, and also a most absurd thing to refuse to look into the matters which were at the root of their differences, and examine, with the sincere desire to find the truth, the places in Scripture upon which each pretended to found their opinion.

But so it was, and so, for the time at least, it continued; for Brown and his friends remained *under the Ban*, and those who *banned* them declined to appeal openly and fairly to those Scriptures upon which they pretended to build what they insisted were the orthodox doctrines of their churches.

And a sad consequence has been that many persons, observing this treatment of sincere and good men, have been led to despise religion, and to look upon the Scriptures with more than doubt. Such persons are to be pitied for their shallowness in drawing so illogical a conclusion, and still more for the result to themselves; but the fact is so, and not to be wondered at.

Many who could not, many who dared not side openly with Brown, yet were found by him full of Christian brotherly feeling towards himself, notwithstanding the prominence in his profession of some of the doctrines for which men are *under the Ban*. They did not merely tolerate him, but admitted sometimes to him, more frequently speaking of him, that they wished there were many like him—half admitting, what they perhaps unconsciously felt, that he was right—that no *ban* or excommunication can make one

who fears God and works righteousness, to be *not* accepted of Him ; nor can it deprive of Divine *grace* one of all those who love the Lord Jesus in *sincerity*.

One of those who loved and perhaps admired, possibly a little envied Brown, said to him :

“ My dear friend, you seem to me to hold that all those who love Jesus and fear God in righteousness of life *are united*, though they are pronounced, or even pronounce themselves, separated into a hundred parties by a hundred differences, only they are united still in *that*. If so, how delightful will it be when they all see that *the declarations of separation did not separate them*. That one link holding them together—a thousand exterior influences dragging them could not break that one, nor make them other than in unity while that one holds, and yet even these cast out each other's names as evil—put each other *under ban*—looking more to the differences that disturb their peace, than to the simple fact which constitutes their oneness. Who then is there who really loves Jesus, fears God, and works righteousness, who is not *under the ban of some church*, for some declared heterodoxy or heresy ? ”

“ Who indeed ? ” replied Brown, sighing. “ Yet,” con-

tinued he, "your remark, which at first saddened, now gladdens me, for it makes me see how large is the church of the *banned* ones, and makes me feel with how many I can sympathise—how many might sympathise with me. To be under *ban* is indeed no hindrance to my hope, but it is a sad obstacle to my joy that my brother men, brother Christians, should *ban* one another."

"Why," said the friend, "cannot they all agree to count each other brother Christians upon the small, but to God sufficient ground you have taken up; and then let each other try to *show* that his peculiar opinion or form of church order and government is best, by showing that it causes more fear of God, love of Jesus, and work of righteousness?"

"Why? *Because these three are put in the background*, though in the Bible they are the tests of acceptance and grace. The predominance of these would destroy priestly *dominion* over faith, and revive the sense of each man's own absolute responsibility—destroying the false apathetic peace of multitudes. When this ground is taken men will agree, Christians will succeed, as well as endeavour, and will keep the

unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, and [the church of the *banned* will be no more, for there will be no more curse. In the meantime we may approximate to this blessed end, and chiefly by blessing those who curse us, and by insisting *that we are one* with all whom God accepts, though they pronounce us under the *ban* still."

"I admit," replied the friend, "that there is right in what you say, and I am very certain that there are vastly more who agree with you than you suspect. What you have sought out and put in some form may, by God's blessing, tend to open the eyes of some to what their own conscience approves—to a blessed truth which the Bible asserts, and to the duty and privilege of, as you say, endeavouring after unity and peace, though it cost effort. Indeed, I am certain that a multitude, even of the most domineering clergy in the most domineering churches, feel their dominion over men's faith a heavy burden; all the more so as there is such a tendency to multiply dogmas and supposed necessary forms and rites; and a multitude who have put themselves under the authority of these, in order chiefly to escape the *sense* of responsibility, find

so little real satisfaction in the apathy their narcotic system produces, that they are longing for something like a simple, invigorating diet for their spirit life. Neither see the way out of the circle in which they run—fastened, as it were, to an immovable post in the centre; but what you have told me may, if you make it known to others, suggest to their minds a remedy, and stir them to use it."

"Then," said Brown, "my life may be of use. I only wish and pray that those to whom I may utter these things may take them as suggestions, and as suggestions only. Then we might expect to see churches, congregations, who, while they honour the clergy, do not try to cast all their responsibility upon them, but, as children of God, use their own freedom and privileges, and regard their pastors as helpers of their joy, and love them accordingly. Then the thousand differences which might exist or arise in the churches would lead to an earnest endeavour of each and of all to show that their view for which they stand up tends to more fear of God, more work of righteousness, more love to the Lord Jesus, and more love to all men, especially to those who themselves love the

Saviour. A suggestion which may in any degree tend towards this is assuredly worth dying for, or, what is much more trying, worth living for."

As Brown was once travelling by rail he happened to be in the compartment of the carriage along with three gentlemen. Two, by their white neckties, he recognised as clergymen.

The conversation turned upon religious subjects. One of the clergymen was soon seen to be of the Church of England, the other a Presbyterian.

An argument arose in which Brown was opposed to both. He appealed to the Bible, they to orthodoxy.

"This," said they, "is the right doctrine."

"This," said he, "is the Bible's teaching."

They denied it. He produced his pocket Bible and read the passage which proved him right. They were silenced, and, if not convinced, at least they had the good sense and feeling to say they would consider the matter at leisure.

They left the carriage.

The other passenger accosted Brown, saying, "Sir, have you not attended the preaching of Mr. Graham in Liverpool?"



"No, sir; I have never heard any one preach there, nor been there except as a traveller passing through."

"I beg pardon," said the other; "but your answers to those gentlemen, and your manner of appeal to the Bible, were so like Mr. Graham that I thought they must have come from him."

"Pray," said Brown, "of what denomination of Christians is Mr. Graham?"

"We acknowledge no denominations of Christians," replied the traveller; "we profess to love the Saviour, to fear God, and to live carefully a righteous life, by God's help, and after the example of Jesus."

"Graham, Graham," said Brown. "Was he once a Presbyterian minister, who was put under the *Ban*?"

"The same, sir; did you know him?"

"I have met him, but I have lost sight of him for some years. Do you know what has led him to preach in Liverpool?"

"He had been a Presbyterian clergyman there, but was accused of holding and teaching doctrines contrary to the tenets of the Scotch Church. His appeal to the Bible was disallowed, and he was condemned and excommunicated as an heretic. However, his con-

gregation in Liverpool missed him sorely, and a large portion of them—some quite agreeing with his views, some holding that though his opinions might not be quite *orthodox*, yet on the whole they were very *scriptural*, and all agreeing that he was the best minister they had known—invited him to return, and built a church for him. You should hear him, sir, if you ever have opportunity. I heard him lately when circumstances called upon him to give a full account of his views upon the Church of Christ. We begged of him to print it, and if you will accept a copy I gladly present you with it, and at the same time beg to express my thankfulness for the instructive conversation I have had the privilege of hearing. Surely it was as good as being in church, though only in a railway carriage; but Mr. Graham would tell us it is a church. He told some of us once such a pleasant anecdote of a church of banned ones on Arthur's Seat, near Edinburgh."

"Ah! did he remember that?"

"Were you there, then? Yes, I see you were. O sir, I am glad to meet you! I feel as if I knew you well. Were you really there?"

“Yes,” replied Brown, “I was there, and I have ever since felt a close union of spirit with those whom I met there.”

“Here, then,” said the traveller, “is Graham’s—essay shall I call it? It is not as full of persuasion as his preached discourse, though rather more convincing. I should observe, that in agreeing to let his congregation print it he said, ‘*Do not expect too much immediate result even from the most convincing arguments or from the plainest declaration of manifest truth; but expect much (you cannot expect too much) ultimate result from a life of faith in the Son of God, a life in the fear of God and works of righteousness.*’”

CHAPTER VIII.

GRAHAM'S SERMON.

“Know ye not that ye are the Temple of God?”

To whom was this said by the Apostle? To the Church of God which was in Corinth, with all that in every place invoke (or call upon, or appeal to, or call themselves by) the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

The temple of God had battlements, or additions to the very structure of the house, which were *not the Lord's*. There were many things set up in it which were quite forbidden. There were priests who bore rule in it by the false prophesying of false prophets. There were those who by their profane conduct made it a den of thieves—false thresholds and posts were set up beside the threshold of God and by His posts; still it was the Temple of God—The *One*, the *Only*, the *Real*.

The duty and privilege of those for whom that Temple was ordained, was not to seek better foundations because of the faults and unauthorized additions or desecration by various means. They were not to make new entrances because the threshold had been unduly stepped upon, nor to make new supports because the old posts had been distrusted or misused. The Temple is the Temple still, and the duty and privilege is to cleanse, to purify it. But when it is cleansed and purified, it is not more truly and really the Temple of God than it was with its unordained battlements, its unduly added threshold and posts, and the desecration of its holiness.

Were it otherwise with the Christian Church, the Corinthians would hardly have been called by that name. They had neglected the Temple; they had brought in unholy divisions—desecrating habits even at the Lord's table; abominable vice was tolerated, false teachers listened to and encouraged. The Christians there were far from what they ought to have been. The Church, the Temple of God—which Temple they were—was in a sad state.

The Apostle did not go about to lay the foundation

again. Once acknowledging that JESUS CHRIST IS THE SON OF GOD, they were built in, living stones, part of the Temple of God. All their errors in doctrine and practice, after this, were to be looked on as desecration and defilement *of the Temple of God*,—sins more sinful than they could have been guilty of before, sins *in the Temple*. There might indeed have been some mere pretenders, who with their lips confessed the Saviour, while in heart they denied Him. These were never really part of the Church of Christ, and of them we do not here speak, but of those who confessed from believing hearts the short but sufficient fundamental confession—

“I BELIEVE THAT JESUS CHRIST IS THE SON OF GOD.”

Of these some were holy men—saints who grew in grace, and in the knowledge of their Lord and Saviour.

Some were unsteady—making a good progress, and falling back again when in much temptation. Some also appear to have made no progress at all; and these last were the persons who had made divisions among the Christians, giving names and denomina-

tions, and taking such themselves, whom Paul rebukes, calling them *babes*, when they ought to be advanced in Christian life, and should have known that the simple foundation of the Christian Church standeth sure—which is CHRIST; but being beguiled from the simplicity which is in that foundation, and even in that early stage of the Church setting up what seemed to them better thresholds, more suitable or fuller confessions of faith than an apostle required, they remained, as it were, stunted in their own growth, and were hindrances to others by their specious errors and additions to God's simple entrance.

Still the Apostle urges upon them the great stimulating fact—

“KNOW YE NOT THAT YE ARE THE TEMPLE OF GOD?”

One Church.

Men say they wish for some plan to unite all true Christians in one church or congregation.

Why need we wish it? for God himself has done it.

As the Apostle Peter bore witness when he said—
“OF A TRUTH I PERCEIVE THAT GOD IS NO RESPECTER
OF PERSONS; BUT IN EVERY NATION, HE THAT FEARETH

HIM AND WORKETH RIGHTEOUSNESS IS ACCEPTED OF HIM."

The Spirit, by Philip, testifies as to what is required for a man to be admitted into the Church or assembly of Christian people. When he was asked by the Ethiopian, "What doth hinder me to be baptized?" the answer was not an examination as to a number of questions, but simply, "IF THOU BELIEVEST WITH ALL THINE HEART, THOU MAYEST."

And the *creed*, or that which he was required to believe, is made plain by the Ethiopian's answer, which satisfied Philip:

"I BELIEVE THAT JESUS CHRIST IS THE SON OF GOD."

And they went down both into the water, and Philip baptized him, and he went on his way rejoicing.

Here was *a point of union*—a credible profession of belief that JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD.

But men have thought to improve on God's plan; and instead of adopting a simple creed, answering one question, "*Believest thou that Jesus Christ is the Son of God?*" and one simple characteristic, *Fearing*

God and working righteousness, men have multiplied questions, and refused admission into their Churches to those who do not answer those questions to their satisfaction.

They, men, refuse admission to those accepted of God—to one who makes the Ethiopian's satisfactory profession of faith!

And are those really excluded, shut out of the Church, who live like Cornelius, and who believe with the Ethiopian?

From an exclusive society, which adopts forms and tests which neither God, nor Jesus, nor the Apostles ratify as such, these Christians may be excluded; but from the Church, the number of those *whom God accepts*, and who are admitted by *His* baptism?—No.

A society adopting rules, *even though they are all in themselves excellent*, is not THE CHURCH. The acceptance of their articles of faith, *however true they may be*, does not affect the admission of any one into the number of Christians.

The Church, or the whole number of Christian people, is not selected or accepted by man, but by

God himself. The Lord knoweth them that are His, and all whom God acknowledges are members of His Church, though men may refuse to admit them, because they follow not them, nor with them, or may cast them out, as those who acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ were cast out by unbelievers.

The attempt to change God's plan, and to make many points of union, has split Christians into a hundred societies or associations, each requiring conformity to a peculiar system, and to a creed of many articles; some of them very difficult to comprehend, and some of them such, or so expressed, as to require considerable straining to make them agree with plain declarations of the Bible; some absolutely unscriptural. But there is unfortunately many a one who, like Diotrophes, loves to have the pre-eminence, who "doth not receive *the brethren*, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the Church." The Apostle John, however, calls those excommunicated ones "*Brethren*." And Christian brethren they are, though refused admission, by the Diotrophes of one Church, or cast out by the Diotrophes of another.

Let us not then spend our time, and wear out our hearts, *wishing* for a point of union for the churches to form one Church ; but let us *assert the fact*, *There is a Church universal or catholic*, and every one who believes that Jesus Christ is the Son of God *is admitted* into it *by* GOD. And every one who feareth God and worketh righteousness *is accepted by* GOD. And where GOD admits, and where GOD accepts, it matters not if a man, or if men, reject or cast out. They may reject from *their* association ; they may cast out of *their* assembly ; but nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure. The Lord knoweth them that are His ; and though a thousand Diotrophes refuse me or cast me out, if GOD be for me, can their opposition cast me out of God's Church ?

Let us claim our brotherhood in the Church universal on God's foundation, and then go on to build upon that foundation, under God's guidance. But man may, perhaps, with the lasting work, build also much that will not endure ; with the gold, silver, precious stones, man may mix wood, hay, stubble ; and more or less of the building so raised may be destroyed, be found unable to stand the trial. Still,

to build up is our duty and our privilege ; only let us be careful not to separate from or quarrel with those who are on the same foundation, though their style of building may differ from ours. It may not be half as good as ours ; it may have faults many, and many defects, or it may be better and more free from faults : but if a man believes that JESUS CHRIST IS THE SON OF GOD, he is admitted of the brotherhood by God. And if he FEAR GOD AND WORK RIGHTEOUSNESS, he is accepted of Him. He may be in much error still, but no error can be greater than that of any Diotrophes, who, liking to have pre-eminence, refuses him admittance, or thrusts him out.

THE CHURCH UNIVERSAL IS THEREFORE IN BEING, *and multitudes who acknowledge it not are yet in it.* If one member say, "I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? Nay, it is, and no denying the fact will change the truth.

If you fear God, work righteousness, and believe that Jesus is the Son of God, I have a right to claim you as a brother Christian.

True, there is much for you to learn and to do still ; but that no more makes you more really a

brother Christian, than his growth in intelligence and size makes my father's son more really my brother than he was as a babe.

If any one really believes that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and really fears God, and, in advancing holiness, works righteousness, he will assuredly go on to learn more about that Son of God, about His nature, His work, His character; but no advance in this knowledge will make him *more really* a Christian, though it will make him a *better* Christian. And he will try to improve in a God-fearing, righteous life. This again will make him a still better man, but not more truly a Christian, a member of that body of which Christ is the head.

Those who love to have the pre-eminence will certainly oppose this simple idea of the REAL, EXISTING, UNIVERSAL *Church*, and will cry out that all order would be overthrown, all congregations deprived of their privileges; their teachers, their pastors, and all would be thrown into confusion.

Nothing can be more untrue. God, who says He accepts those as His who come under the rule I have mentioned, and who sent His apostles to admit the

centurion and the Ethiopian, and such as these,—God is not the author of confusion, but of order.

Men who believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, men who fear God and work righteousness, will certainly form themselves into associations, and make regulations according to their views of what is best for growth in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; and doubtless the rules and regulations will differ in different associations. There is no reason to think that *the same order* prevailed in the Churches of Jerusalem, Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, Rome, and others—nay, there are very certain indications of the contrary; and even in doctrine these churches often differed, some admitting or introducing that which others rejected; but even the erring brothers who believed that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, who feared also God and worked righteousness, were acknowledged as *in the Church*. Those only were looked upon as not Christian brothers who denied that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God; or who, not fearing God, failed to work righteousness.

And assuredly, when the simple point of union is

seen as a fact, and not merely sought as something to be desired, when it is perceived that God *has* a universal Church on earth, each member marked with His simple mark, those who are of that Church, and who see it is needful for men to make regulations, to form associations, to appoint teachers, pastors, ministers, will do so in the desire of building up the Church, the body, of which Christ is the head, and will not make their different plans and forms the means of causing discord and enmity and disunion. But it will be easily seen that any association, or the Church in any particular place, if its system and regulations are calculated to cause ill-will, hatred, and violence, that association or church is so far in error.

Let the universal brotherhood be acknowledged (for it is fact) of all who believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and the acceptance into God's family be maintained of all who fear Him and work righteousness, and then we may expect to see an endeavour, and a successful one, to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Let all who know that all those to whom Paul wrote, with the Corinthians, are together built for a

holy temple for the Lord, claim not only their right to be accounted members of Christ's Church, but let them each claim all of those whom Paul addresses as brothers, not saying, "*We ought to be brothers,*" but "*We ought to be brotherly, for we are brothers.*" Why should we wrong one another?

Let us not only say this, but by *brotherly kindness* show it.

Thus shall each living stone, taking its due place as a part of the Temple, as a member of the Church, both bless and be blessed, and together, "speaking the truth in love, grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body, fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the building up of itself *in Love.*" And so acknowledge Christ the Son of God head over His own house, "whose house are we if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end."

"And let us not judge one another any more, but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block


or an occasion to fall in his brother's way." Do you not suppose those men *sincere* who uphold what you or others may believe to be errors, even great errors? Was not Saul sincere when he verily thought he ought to persecute the Church of God? He was *wrong* nevertheless; he ought to have used the advantages God gave him, and have searched the Scriptures, and have applied his mind and heart to the understanding of the truth. All who follow Saul in his neglect of this, and in his sincere bigotry and conscientious persecution of those he believed to be all wrong, will have to confess, as Paul did, how wrong and how wicked were their opinions and their conduct.

When you refuse to persecute or to shut out from Christian brotherhood and communion any one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God, it does not in the least follow that you admit that he is right, or even that he may perhaps be right, in those things in which you differ from him; but be assured that where he is wrong, your way to win him to be right is not to consider him an enemy, but to treat him as a brother. If he is wrong in what he thinks

is true, that is no reason why you should do wrong in refusing the right hand of fellowship to one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God, or who, fearing God, works righteousness. You will feel his errors and faults all the more when you love him as a brother; you will be able more successfully to endeavour to turn him from the error of his ways; and you will thus be a more faithful follower of Him who came not to condemn but to save.

Be sure also that there is no more certain evidence that your own faith is not well founded and your own opinion not well grounded than an unwillingness to try the foundations and grounds of your faith and opinions.

I do not mean that one should lightly enter into controversy with every one who is inclined to dispute, much less that one should even listen to persons of *bad moral character* who may assail your religion; but when a person of good repute calmly and seriously holds out to you something which he professes really to believe, and which you do not think is true, and if he proposes to you to examine the question, searching the Scriptures, and seeking God's blessing, then



for his sake, your own sake, and the truth's sake, you will meet his desire. If he is wrong, you may convince him; if you *know* that you are right, you cannot fear that he will convince you; and if you are *doubtful*, is that a desirable state to remain in? Is it approved by the Word, which tells us to "prove all things, and hold fast that which is good."

CHAPTER IX.

WHAT PASSED BETWEEN MR. THOMPSON AND MR. CLOSE.

"These things saith He that is true, He that hath the key of David, He that openeth and no man shutteth; and shutteth and no man openeth. . . . Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it."—REV. iii. 7, 8.

AFTER they left the company Mr. Thompson took Mr. Close in his carriage, and requested him to come home with him and spend the next day at his parsonage.

As they went on in the dark Mr. Thompson proposed to put off any discussion upon the subject till the next day. "My head is weary," said he, "and my heart is full, so let us speak of something else to-night.

"Tell me then," continued he, "who was that person with whom I saw you walking and in conversation as I passed you on the road yesterday, near your house?"

Mr. Close told him that it was a stranger, who had come to him with a letter from a friend in Liverpool, recommending him to his notice and, if needful, to his friendly assistance.

He was a poor Irishman—not poor in the sense of destitute, or requiring help in money—but a man who had lived by the wages of his trade.

He was a journeyman tailor, had been a Roman Catholic, had been led to inquire into the foundations of his religion, and finding reason to doubt their soundness, he had read and had spoken to those who he thought could assist him in clearing up his difficulties. First he had read books and consulted priests of his religion, and finding that they by no means cleared up his doubts, he applied to the ministers of different denominations, each of whom gave him more or less satisfactory answers, and lent him books which helped him in his search for truth, and all of whom recommended him to study the Bible for himself.

He had done so, and the result was that he ceased to attach himself to the Roman Catholic worship.

This had gone on for some years. At first little notice was taken of his ceasing to go to mass or confession; but a fellow-workman, who was a very strong Roman Catholic, not only observed his change, but first spoke of it to himself, and then to the priest, and ended by raising a persecution against him, which obliged him to leave Liverpool.

"I asked him," added Mr. Close, "what Church he had joined, as I understood he had left the Roman Catholic. Was he of the Established Church?"

"He hesitated, and said he hoped I would not be angry. It was not his fault, he thought, but he did not belong to my Church.

"I assured him that, however mistaken I might think him, I should not be angry. But I repeated the question, What Church?"

"'Alas! no Church,' he replied.

"'No Church!' said I, astonished.

"'Well, dear sir,' said the poor man, 'they tell me I am of no Church, but I feel as if I was of every Church. Yet I am puzzled, for no Church will have me.

"'I have,' said he, 'friends who belong to several

different Churches—some of my old friends Catholics—who never persecuted me, and who agree with me in my views of religion, but who say they dare not go out with me into the wide wilderness, belonging to no Church, as they see me; then my kind friends who have helped me, clergymen and others. When I left Liverpool I took service in the house of a Presbyterian minister. Oh, sir, he was a good man! He treated me like a brother; read with me, prayed with me, talked with me. But when he wished me to become one of his Church I found that I must cease to be one of the Church of the good rector of the parish I had lived in, and whose good advice had so helped me, and whose kindness and care had so comforted me. I could not separate myself from him and his Church.

“‘Well, sir,’ continued he, ‘I had read a book about Independents, and I thought there was great Christian liberty with them, and I knew a very good man of that Church who had employed me in my trade. He took me to his minister, but, besides being asked some questions about my belief, which I think I did not answer to his satisfaction, I found the same great hin-

drance, that if I joined his Church I must break off from my brother Christians of the Established Church and of the Presbyterian. So I went the round of them,' said he, 'and no one would have me unless I so joined them as to give up being joined to all the others. They said I could not belong to two Churches at once. I could not see it so. I feel as if I was joined with every one who is taught by Jesus to love our Father in heaven and our brothers and sisters upon earth, and to live so as to try to please our Father and to serve our brothers and sisters. I **know**, sir,' said he, 'that I am still very **ignorant**, and there **are many things which the** learned folk in each Church say people must believe, but which I can't see to be as they say, and perhaps some would refuse me a place in their Church, and would not acknowledge me as a brother unless I profess to believe all these things, and would not think it right to admit me just because I believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and because I try to follow Him; unless I say I believe all about Him that they say they gather from the Scriptures, and unless I take the view of righteousness which they say is the right one. Now, sir, they may

be right or may be wrong in some of these matters, for all I can see, but I feel it a hard thing—pardon a poor man for speaking strongly—I think it's a wrong to shut the door of a Church against a poor man who loves his Father in heaven, and his brothers on earth, who tries to follow the blessed Saviour, the Son of God, that he may himself be more what a son of God ought to be, and who can't profess to believe what he can't see to be true, and who can't separate himself from any of his brother Christians whom he loves in his heart, though they do shut their door against him.' ”

Close ceased.

“And what,” said Thompson, “did you advise him?”

“Nothing,” replied the other.

“Nothing?”

“I read the 143d Psalm with him. We prayed together many of its petitions; we agreed that the enemies which afflict our souls, in our case should be taken to mean our darkness and perplexities, which we prayed might be destroyed, and our way made plain to know how we should walk, as well as what we should believe. Advice I had none to offer; I felt how much I needed advice myself.”

They now arrived at Mr. Thompson's house. It was late. They did not begin any discussion that night; but as they separated, Thompson shaking Close by the hand, said—

“My dear sir, as Philip was sent to the Ethiopian, so I do think this poor wandering tailor has been sent to us to give us a light—to *me* at least.”

“Ay, to *me*,” rejoined Close.

The next morning Thompson said to his companion, “Your tailor kept me awake almost all night. If I had slept I should have dreamed of him; and as it was, my thoughts were very like the visions of a dream, so vividly did they picture a succession of events to me.

“I represented to myself your earnest inquiring tailor, or rather he represented himself to my mind and imagination, as seeking admission into a Church. He came to one door-keeper, and asked:

“‘May I come in and find a home in this community?’

“‘Who or what are you?’ asked the door-keeper.

“‘I am one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God, and who desires to be a follower of Him.’”

“ ‘What certificate of character can you show?’

“The tailor showed a certificate to the purpose that he was known to be a God-fearing, well-conducted man.

“ ‘But,’ added the door-keeper, ‘do you add to the belief that Jesus is the Son of God a firm belief in these articles of OUR Church?’

“ ‘Nay, sir,’ answered he, ‘I cannot truly say so.’

“ ‘What! you deny the truth of our Articles and yet seek to be one of us!’

“ ‘I beg pardon, sir. I only said I could not truly say that I had faith in them—I did not deny them; I did not imagine that belief in all this was needed by one who only sought admission into your Church.’

“ ‘Well then,’ said the door-keeper, ‘do you believe the Creeds of our Church?’

“ ‘Rather confused, the tailor replied, ‘I have given you reference to evidence of my conduct, and told you what I profess to believe. I only seek admission into your Church, in which I hope to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. May I come in?’

“ ‘You had better go first and learn our creeds,

and when you are ready to profess your adherence to what they contain, our door may be open to you.'

"The poor man went away looking disappointed and sad ; but after a little he cheered up and said, ' Well, that is not the only Church ; I will try another.'

"He knocked at another door and made the same application, gave the same reference as to his living in the fear of God and practice of righteousness, and said that, believing that Jesus was the Son of God, he sought admission into the Church of Christ. This door-keeper took him into a room beside the porch and questioned him, saying :

" ' Your faith seems very limited in your profession. Do you believe the doctrines of the Trinity and of salvation by faith, and the other doctrines which make the scheme of salvation perfect as held by our Church ?'

"He replied, ' Sir, I only seek admission into the Church as a believer, a poor humble Christian. I can give no affirmative answer to your questions.'

" ' Then,' said this door-keeper, ' I fear you cannot pass the entrance of our Church ; we must be more careful whom we admit for fear of introducing heresies or

causing schisms in our congregation: you must have a more extended faith before you can be one of us.'

"So the poor fellow went from door to door, in my imagination; but in my acquaintance with churches (and it is a pretty extensive acquaintance as you, Close, know), I could not imagine one which would or could open its door to him on so meagre a confession of faith, so narrow a qualification as his. As he wandered disconsolate he met two reverend-looking men whose appearance attracted him. He was half afraid to address them, and to tell them his sad disappointment. But one of them spoke to him as he passed, and asked him where he was going as he wandered so sadly along.

" 'I was looking for some Church door which could admit a poor solitary man to be one of its community,' replied he.

" 'But what!' asked the elder of the two; 'could you not find the door of the Church?'

" 'Nay,' said he. 'Sir, I found doors plenty, and door-keepers too, but none over whose threshold or between whose posts I could be allowed to pass.'

" 'Philip,' cried the elder, 'this is a sad case.'

" Philip replied, ' Truly, Peter, it is sad. The poor man probably does not know that Jesus is the Son of God, or perhaps is leading an unholy life, and so cannot be one of us. But let us inquire further; if he knows not Jesus, we will instruct him. If he is living in allowed wickedness, we may turn him from the error of his ways.'

" The poor man seemed in my imagination to listen trembling, and to recognise Peter and Philip as men of high standing and authority. He hung down his head when Peter addressed him, saying :

" ' My poor brother man, tell me how have you been living; what has been your conduct of late years? I fear from your having been refused acceptance at the door of the Church you have been leading a bad life, without the fear of God.'

" Silently he handed his testimonials of good character and religious deportment,

" ' Ah!' cried Peter, ' this is strange, for I have learned that whosoever feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of Him.' Turning to the man, he added, ' And you showed this to the persons who would not accept you?'

“ ‘Yes, sir, to all and to each of them; but it was not enough.’

“ Philip then put in his word: ‘Perhaps this man is a moral heathen, who has never heard of Jesus the anointed Son of God, and so, although he has this certificate of fearing God and living righteously, he could not be admitted a member of the Church of Christ. Do you not seek that, my friend?’ said he, kindly.

“ ‘Yes, that is what I am seeking,’ replied the man; ‘and I beg of you, kind sirs, to help and instruct me. You seem to know the Church and the way in.’

“ ‘Yes, truly,’ said both. ‘Here we are at the door.’

“ ‘And what doth hinder me from being admitted?’ asked the inquirer, gaining confidence from the gentle, winning tone of Peter and Philip.

“ ‘The entrance is only possible for believers in Jesus; they only can pass the threshold and door-posts of the Church of Christians.’

“ ‘May I go in?’ joyfully, yet trembling, asked he.

“ ‘If thou believest with all thine heart, thou

mayest,' replied Philip, as he held the latch of the door.

" 'Alas!' cried the poor petitioner for admittance, 'show me the Creeds, the Articles, the terms and expressions and forms, and I will try. I will tell you then if I believe.'

" 'What do you mean?' cried both the friends. 'Who asked you about these things as qualifications for admission into our number, into our brotherhood; for admission through these door-posts, for right to pass this threshold of the Lord?'

" 'Ah, sirs, do not be angry,' stammered the frightened man; 'you see all these Churches with their door-posts and their thresholds: none of them can be passed by any one who does not assent to and profess things which are different at each more or less; and, to my poor mind, some of them difficult at all the doors.'

" 'And these pretend to be each a door, *the* door of the Church of Christ!' cried Peter. 'Who, O Lord, has dared to set up their threshold by Thy threshold, and their posts by Thy posts?'

" 'Nay, my friend, we show you *the true* door; here it is.'

“ ‘But may I go in?’ timidly asked he.

“ ‘I have told you, if thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest.’

“ ‘Ah, sirs, I can make but small profession. My faith is small. I doubt much that I hear asserted; I understand little of what the door-keepers require. I fear, I fear I shall not be allowed to pass.’ So lamented the poor tailor in my imagination.

“ But Peter took him by the hand, and said:

“ ‘Speak out, brother man; say what you can say of your belief; say only what you are sure you believe. Do not be afraid.’

“ Then he lifted up his head, and he spoke distinctly:

“ ‘I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.’ And as he spoke the door was open, and he was within it, he knew not how. He found that he was in the Church, accepted, admitted.

“ Then,” added Mr. Thompson, “wearied with my thoughts and imaginations, I slept at last; and when I awoke my vision was clear in my mind, and also the source of my imaginations, for my Bible lay on my table, and my paper and pencil beside it with

which I had been making notes at midnight before I lay down; and the passages to which I had been led in following up the ideas suggested by the story of your tailor were, first, Acts x. 34, 35, which shows us whom God accepts; and, secondly, Acts viii. 36-38, which shows us whom the Church of Christ *acknowledges* and *admits*; and so my conclusion was in my imaginings, and is in my conviction, that the tailor was *in the Church*, though the doors of the assumed thresholds and posts were shut against him."

Mr. Close remarked that Thompson's frequent allusion to threshold and door-posts brought some passage to his mind, but he could not exactly recollect it. The other then said that he had especially in his mind, as bearing on the subject, the passage in the forty-third chapter of Ezekiel, where the Lord is represented as saying of those whom He condemned, "In their setting *their* threshold by *my* thresholds, and *their* post by *my* posts, and the wall between me and them, they have even defiled my holy name."

"I see now by your application of it," said Close, "how the tailor's story leads to the conviction that *very little* is to be required as the test for member-

ship in the Christian body ; and I think that the less we add to Peter's and Philip's tests at the door-posts and thresholds the more we are likely to add to the knowledge, faith, and love of those brought within the door, and acknowledged as brothers and sisters in the congregation."

Thompson, taking him by the hand, replied, " Right, brother, right. Now I need not, for brotherhood, investigate the articles of your faith. We accept each other as Peter teaches us ; we admit each other's position as sons in our Father's family, as Philip admitted the Ethiopian. If we agree on more things, so much the better ; if we differ on various important matters, that cannot keep either of us out of brotherhood."

But Close feared that few would be content with so simple a confession of faith, so short a creed, so small a test for admission to acknowledged brotherhood among Christians. Thompson could not but agree with him ; but they comforted one another with the assurance that it depended not on man to accept or reject a brother. " If I am accepted of HIM of whom Peter spoke, am I not accepted indeed, though

I may be despised and rejected of men?" so spoke Thompson.

They now felt that even a difference on so important a question as that which had been brought forward by Brown should not separate those who held different opinions about it. True, one side must be right and one wrong; but if both confessed that Jesus is the Son of God, if both fear God, and in His fear live a good life, though each may see grave errors in the opinions or in the faith of the other, they will never for a moment be really separate; no, not though they may think themselves so, or each may declare the other so. They *are* united, and *shall* find it so.

"Was not the Saviour's prayer," said Thompson, "'Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those that Thou hast given me that they may be one as we.' Now, then," added Thompson, "we may discuss the question debated yesterday without fear of the consequences, even if we should disagree."

But they did not disagree. Though neither of them sought in a way which made them slaves to the *letter* of the Scripture, yet both appealed honestly to the word and spirit of it, and then it was plain to both

that Brown was right, and the error was on the other side. And although they both saw and felt that this difference of opinion and consequent modifying of faith did not really separate them from any who acknowledged Jesus as the Son of God, and who thus believing progressed in the ways of righteousness and in the fear of God, still they saw and felt that the formularies of the religious denomination to which they had belonged and by which they had been supported, required adhesion to opinions which they now repudiated; they therefore unhesitatingly gave up their position in the religious body to which they had been attached, as we have already learned.

First they betook themselves to private life among their friends: but finding that there was a kind of private *Ban* as well as a public one, and that the cold charity with which their differences from so-called orthodox opinions were met was even more grievous to bear and more difficult to combat than the open hostility of some, and than the weight of Church censure could be; and as they failed in getting their opponents to discuss their differences in brotherly conference, making the Bible the arbiter, they perhaps

weakly, but certainly with good intent, and with sincere desire to keep the oneness of the spirit in the bond of peace, betook themselves to sheep-farming in Australia, desiring whatsoever they did to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the glory of God the Father.

And as has been shown, God had His work for them to do, and gave them the commission they most desired—

“FEED MY SHEEP.”

THE END.

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